Memoirs of James Begg, D. D. Minister of Newington Free Church, Edinburgh: by Thomas Smith Including Autobiographical Chapters by Dr. Begg

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MEMOIRS

OF

JAMES BEGG, D.D.

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JAMES BEGG, D.D.

MINISTER OF NEWINGTON FREE CHURCH, EDINBURGH.

BY

THOMAS SMITH, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF EVANGELISTIC THEOLOGY, NEW COLLEGE, EDINBURGH.

Including Autobiographical Chapters by Dr. Begg.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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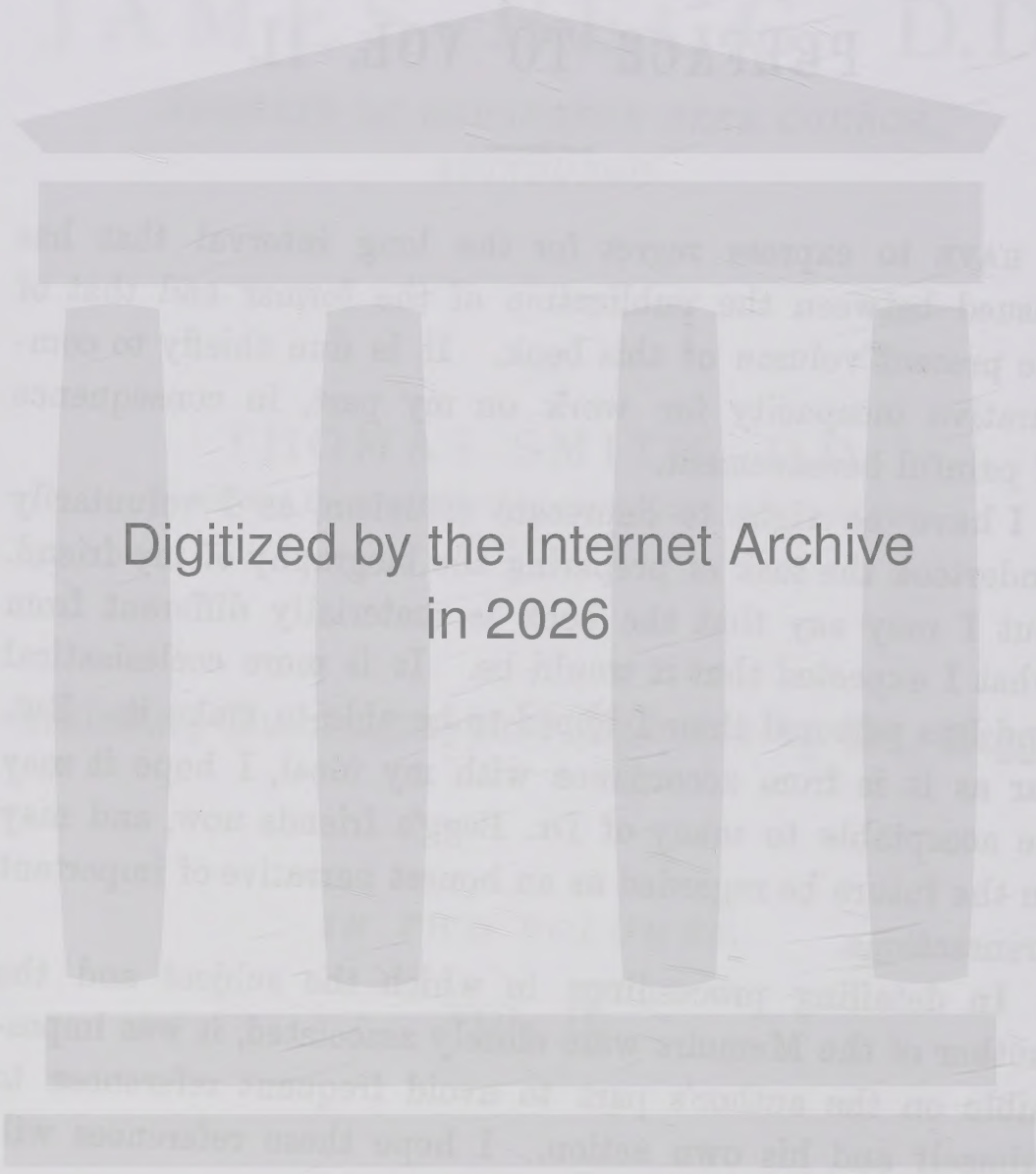
PREFACE TO VOL. II.

I HAVE to express regret for the long interval that has ensued between the publication of the former and that of the present volume of this book. It is due chiefly to comparative incapacity for work on my part, in consequence of painful bereavement.

I have no right to deprecate criticism, as I voluntarily undertook the task of preparing the biography of my friend. But I may say that the book is materially different from what I expected that it would be. It is more ecclesiastical and less personal than I hoped to be able to make it. But, far as it is from accordance with my ideal, I hope it may be acceptable to many of Dr. Begg's friends now, and may in the future be regarded as an honest narrative of important transactions.

In detailing proceedings in which the subject and the author of the Memoirs were closely associated, it was impossible on the author's part to avoid frequent references to himself and his own action. I hope these references will not be deemed to indicate offensive egotism.

T. S.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CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DISRUPTION.—NEWINGTON FREE CHURCH.

THE late Mr. D. O. Hill's picture of the Disruption contains many anachronisms—some of them of an amusing and grotesque character. This was probably unavoidable in a picture whose production necessarily occupied the artist's time for many years. But notwithstanding this defect, it is highly valued by all who take interest in the memorable event which it commemorates, as containing a great multitude of most faithfully executed portraits, although some of them represent men at a considerably more advanced stage of life than that which they had reached in 1843. In that picture Dr. Begg occupies a prominent and conspicuous position. His portrait, having been taken at the time, is free from the defect to which I have just alluded as attaching to some of the others. Those who most strongly disapproved of the Disruption will not refuse to us who took part in it the acknowledgment that we have right to a feeling of pride in those who were our leaders at that time, and in the steadfastness with which both they and the great body of their followers maintained what they regarded as the cause of truth and of God. It is a phenomenon worthy of the best

thought of the student of history that in so small a country as Scotland, so many men should have been found able to shed the lustre of noble character and of great and varied powers over a historical event in which they were called to act. It were easy to set down a list of names of which not only Free Churchmen but all Scotchmen may well be proud; but not so easy to make the list a moderately short one. By all allowance Chalmers, and Gordon, and Welsh, and Patrick Macfarlane, should head the list—*facile principes*, first in the foremost rank. These veterans had a noble following of like-minded men. Among the juniors there were five who may without any invidiousness be named as worthily taking precedence of their fellows, Cunningham, Candlish, James and Robert Buchanan, and Begg; such men as the Marquis of Breadalbane, Campbell of Monzie, and Mr. M'Gill Crichton, amongst the nobility and landed gentry, were faithful found midst many faithless; while a noble band of the highest intellect in the land, such as David Brewster, Murray Dunlop, Earle Monteith, Graham Speirs, Hugh and James Miller, constituted a phalanx, of whose members, as of the brothers of Gideon, it might have been said, "each one was according to the form of the children of a king" (Judg. viii. 18, *marg. reading*).

I am not aware that the grouping of the figures in this picture represents any scene that actually occurred. I presume that it is an embodiment of the artist's estimate of the place which the several actors held in public estimation. I, therefore, regard the position assigned to Dr. Begg as an important testimony to the influence which he exerted, and the part which he took, in the agitation and the contendings which issued in the formation of the Free Church. Associated with men whom he had all his days revered, and to whom he would have been the first to acknowledge that he was in some respects far inferior, he possessed aptitudes and qualifications which no one of them possessed in equal degree;

especially the faculty of ready and powerful speech, not indeed so irresistibly logical as that of Dr. Cunningham, nor so wonderfully ingenious as that of Dr. Candlish, but perhaps all the fitter to attract and influence a popular assembly. From beginning to end of his career he was distinctly a *popular* speaker and writer and preacher. He believed in the people, and the people believed in him. The measures which he advocated from time to time were not always popular, but the advocate was; and so far as I know, he never shrank from the advocacy of unpopular measures through fear of diminishing his personal popularity. By *the people* in this connection, I do not mean the lower ranks as distinguished from the higher, but rather the *intelligent* of all ranks in distinction from the *intellectual.* Over and above the regret which Dr. Begg shared with all his brethren in quitting an Establishment which he and they loved so dearly, there was in his case the additional element of regret, that the Disruption severed him from some of those relatives to whom he was attached by ties of the closest and the tenderest kind. His aged father, whom he was never weary of quoting and commending, and his younger brother, in whom he felt the deepest interest, remained in the Establishment which he quitted, and long years afterwards he suffered intense pain when his opponents in controversy rudely cast reproaches on the memory of the late minister of Monkland, charging him with inconsistency, and thinking that he preferred the manse and glebe and stipend of New Monkland to the tabernacle, for every pin of which he had once on a memorable occasion expressed his determination to stand. I once was witness of such a scene, and it was manifestly by a strong effort that Dr. Begg controlled his indignation, and replied, "more in sorrow than in anger" to the unfeeling taunts. It is probable that, in most cases there were such aggravations on both sides of the pain of separation betwixt those who had hitherto taken sweet counsel as they walked

to the house of God in company; but the prominence of the father and the son, the minister of New Monkland and the minister of Liberton, made their case better known than that of others. I have no doubt that the father regretted, as much as I know that the son did, that father and son were unable to see eye to eye on the momentous questions which were then at issue. Of one thing I am certain, that the son never ceased to regard his father with the strongest affection and the deepest veneration. Of this the notices in the autobiographical chapters are sufficient evidence, and again and again he referred in his speeches to his father, always representing him as a man of singular sagacity and prudence, as well as uncompromising adherence to principle. I have not the same evidence of the father's feelings towards the son; but I have no doubt that he continued to cherish the kindliest feelings towards him, and respected him all the more because he acted according to his view of the right, and that at no small cost. Dr. Begg of New Monkland lived two years after the Disruption, and died on the 11th of June 1845, in the eighty-third year of his age, and the fifty-second of his ministry.

It was stated in a previous chapter that during Dr. Begg's incumbency the *quoad sacra* parish of Gilmerton was formed out of the parish of Liberton. The minister of Gilmerton, as well as Dr. Begg, "cast in his lot" with the Free Church. It seems to have been the difficulty of procuring sites, as well as uncertainty as to the number of parishioners that would adhere to the Free Church, that suggested the removal of Dr. Begg to the side of Edinburgh nearest to Liberton. His congregation was therefore designated as that of Liberton and Newington, while the congregation which was actually in the civil parish of Liberton was named the Gilmerton congregation.[1] This arrangement continued for some years;

[1] The matter is thus stated in the *Witness* of 19th August 1843:—
"LIBERTON AND GILMERTON.—On Wednesday, the 2d instant, the following

but it was an inconvenient one, neither of the churches being sufficiently near to the people in the southern and western portions of the parish. In 1856 the Gilmerton church was transferred northward, and a proper Liberton Free Church was organised, and called as its first minister Mr. D. K. Guthrie; and the congregation of Dr. Begg became that of Newington. I understand that there are still a few of the Liberton people who continue to worship in Newington, and I am sure that my friend Mr. Guthrie does not impute to any want of respect to him their persistency in taking pleasure in the stones of a fabric endeared to them by many sacred associations.

It has been stated that Dr. Begg and his congregation, at the Disruption, received great kindness at the hands of the United Presbyterian congregation in Nicolson Street, who put themselves to much inconvenience, altering their own hours of service, in order to accommodate their neighbours. This act of disinterested kindness made a deep impression on the minds of those who were the recipients of it; and one of the first acts of the kirk-session of Newington was to acknowledge it. This they did in the following minute, presumably composed by their minister, and in any case entitled to a prominent place in his Biography:—

"At Newington, November 13th, 1843, which day the kirk-session of the Free Church, Newington, met and was constituted by prayer.

report was given in and approved of by the Free Presbytery of Edinburgh. Since that time it has been submitted to a public meeting in the large hall at Gilmerton, and having met with the unanimous approbation of the assembled parishioners, measures are in progress to procure a suitable piece of ground for a new church:—'After duly considering all the circumstances, the Committee of Presbytery are of opinion that the original parish of Liberton naturally divides itself into two portions, the one south and the other north of the parish church. That the northern section may very conveniently be attached to the new church at Newington, whilst efforts ought to be immediately made to secure the erection of a new church for the southern district, including the present parish of Gilmerton, in the most central and convenient situation in which a site can be procured for that purpose.'"

"The kirk-session considering that, 'by the good hand of God' upon the congregation over which they are appointed to preside 'in the Lord,' the new place of worship which has been in the course of erection during summer has been completed and opened; and considering the great kindness and Christian liberality with which the minister, elders, managers, and congregation of the United Secession Church, Nicolson Street, have allowed this congregation the *free use* of their comfortable and commodious place of worship since the month of May, changing their own usual hours of worship for their accommodation—RESOLVE to record the deep and heartfelt gratitude which they cherish for kindness so truly Christian and so eminently seasonable,—their deep sense of the very handsome manner in which it has been manifested; and their earnest prayer that the minister, elders, managers, and all connected with the Nicolson Street congregation, may, in return, be abundantly blessed by 'the Father of lights,' from whom cometh down 'every good and perfect gift;' and that the Christian intercourse, thus so happily commenced, may be a pledge of greater union and brotherly love amongst the various sections of true Christians in our land, and of the speedy approach of the time when 'the watchmen of Zion shall all see eye to eye,' and 'as there is but one Shepherd, there shall be but one sheepfold.'

"The kirk-session direct a copy of this minute to be forwarded, with every expression of their gratitude and affection, to the Reverend Mr. Johnston, minister, as well as to the elders and managers of Nicolson Street Church, to be by them laid before the congregation.

"On the same evening a meeting was held of the members of Newington Free Church congregation, which was numerously attended. The above minute of the kirk-session was read and submitted to their consideration, when they unanimously and cordially approved of the same, as a just expression of their feelings of gratitude for the singular kindness which they have received from the Nicolson Street congregation, and requested that this expression of their sentiments might be conveyed to the Reverend Mr. Johnston, his elders, managers, and congregation, along with the minute of the kirk-session. (Signed) JAMES BEGG, *Moderator*."

I may anticipate by many years the order of events, so far as to state that the cordial amity thus expressed continued to subsist without diminution between Dr. Johnston and Dr. Begg; and that even when the latter was strenuously opposing the formation of a union of the two churches, he never ceased to cherish feelings of brotherly kindness and sincere respect towards his neighbour; and I have good reason to believe that these feelings were equally cherished by that neighbour towards him.

The minute which has just been quoted intimates that the Newington Free Church was ready for occupation before the 13th of November 1843. That such a work should have been executed between the end of May and the beginning of November, cannot but be regarded as very remarkable. It would have been impossible, but for what has been often spoken of in another connection—the exceptionally fair weather of the summer of 1843. It was a matter of heart-felt thankfulness to thousands that when they were constrained to conduct their worship without the shelter of wall or roof, there was no instance of that worship being made impossible, and very few of its being made even uncomfortable, by inclement weather during the summer months. Equally favourable were the "skyey influences" for expediting the building operations all over the country. It is now deemed superstition to recognise the hand of God in such a coincidence. But it is both reasonable and comforting to believe that the Lord of heaven and earth controlled and regulated the powers of nature with a view to the well-being of those who, at all events, believed that it was in acting according to His will that they were subjected to privations and sufferings.

The speed with which the Newington Church was erected was doubtless due in great measure to the energy of Dr. Begg. The structure actually erected was not, like many of the Disruption churches a merely temporary erection,

intended to be superseded ere long by a better building. It was afterwards much altered, its length being diminished, and compensation made for the accommodation thus subducted by the erection of galleries, but it is still the church of the Newington congregation; and while it has no pretension to architectural beauty, it is at least free from any glaring offence against good taste and architectural propriety. Dr. Begg always regarded it with very special interest. The churches in which he had previously ministered had, of course, the advantage of comparative antiquity and of accumulated associations. But this was, in a very special sense, his own. In its every stone, from foundation to pinnacle, he took a special and peculiar pleasure, and even a far inferior edifice would have been beautified to his eye by the circumstances in which it was reared; and the members of the congregation shared this feeling. Apart from higher and holier considerations, they loved the church because it was their own; they loved it because it was his; and there was probably no congregation in the Free Church in which was more prevalent a healthy and intelligent *esprit de corps.* I need not say that there is no necessary incompatibility between this spirit and that of all-loving catholicity. We love not *man* the less because we love *men;* we love not Christianity and Christians less, because we specially love the one gospel as it has been ministered to us and our fathers, and love specially those who are most closely associated with ourselves in the adoration of Him of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. It is a spurious love that professes to embrace the general and to exclude the particular, to love the whole and not the parts.

The following notice of the progress of the work, and of the spirit in which it was set about, occurs in the *Witness* of 9th August 1843:—

"Liberton and Newington Free Church.—This building, for Mr. Begg's congregation, is in the rapid course of

erection. It is a substantial stone edifice, in a beautiful situation, and without galleries; and will hold 1000 sittings. The people in the southern districts of Edinburgh were astonished and delighted at the cordiality and vigour with which a large band of the Free Churchmen of Liberton gratuitously cleared away a mass of earth from the foundations, doing as much in a couple of nights as would have cost many days, and a large sum, to have accomplished otherwise. Although the walls are nearly half finished, the foundation-stone was only laid on Monday evening last. The stone was laid amidst a large concourse of spectators, by Lieut.-Colonel Kinnaird, one of the elders, after which an appropriate prayer was offered by the Rev. James Begg. The collectors and others then adjourned to St. Paul's Church, where a very eloquent and powerful address was delivered by Dr. Chalmers to the collectors of this district, including those of Liberton, Newington, and St. Paul's, with some from Dr. Clason's. The admission was by free tickets, to prevent overcrowding. We hope soon to have the happiness to announce the commencement of three or four more new churches in Edinburgh. The rest of Scotland has fairly got the start of us, and the winter hastens on."

In a later *Witness* I find a very mild joke on the subject of this church, which some may consider to be worth repeating. Two friends, one a Free Churchman and the other an adherent of the Established Church, were passing along the street. "What is that new building for?" said the former. "Do you see that building opposite?" said the other, pointing to the Newington Established Church, "Well, this building is to be a *drain* for that one."

The following is the brief account, given in the *Witness*, of the opening of the church when completed. The subsequent history of the church and of its first minister, lends an importance to the event altogether out of proportion to the contemporary notice of it, even by so friendly a journalist as Hugh Miller:—

"FREE CHURCH, NEWINGTON.—This church has been opened for public worship. Dr. Candlish preached on Friday at two

o'clock; and Mr. Begg, Mr. Johnston,[1] and Mr. Tweedie on Sabbath. On all these occasions the church was crowded to excess, and the collection amounted to £53, 4s. In every respect this is a most admirable, most substantial, and commodious place of worship. It is seated for 1002, and is so well proportioned that all can easily see and hear, and so well ventilated that, although excessively crowded on these occasions, it was never in the least close or overheated. All the ministers felt it most easy to speak in, and the people were much pleased with it. In a word, this may be regarded as a perfect model of a church. It is certainly one of the best in Edinburgh. The plan was made by Mr. D. Cousins, the mason-work erected by Mr. M'Kenzie, Hope Park End, and the wright-work by Mr. Johnston, Niddry Mill. Mr. Begg has received a very handsome set of communion cups, with baptism basin, for the use of the church, from Miss Bell, late of Newington, at present residing at Clifton, and two beautiful brass plates, with oak stands, for taking the collection, from Mr. Robert Forrest, Montague Street. The pulpit, which is very handsome, has also been erected at the expense of an excellent member of the congregation, whilst tokens, the furniture for the vestry, communion linens, a handsome clock for the church, and several other necessary and useful articles, have been received from other kind friends. At a meeting of the congregation on Monday evening, it was resolved, after a statement by Mr. Begg, to adopt immediate measures for clearing off every shilling of debt that still remains on the building."

Thus at last our friend had found his proper place: on the 12th of November 1843 he first occupied the pulpit of Newington Free Church, and until the 29th of September 1883 he proclaimed from it the same gospel of the grace of God.

[1] Dr. Johnston, I presume, of the Nicolson Street United Presbyterian Church, whose kindness to the congregation I have already noticed.—T. S.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FIRST FREE CHURCH ASSEMBLY—DEPUTATIONS TO ENGLAND—EXTRA WORK.

In a previous chapter I gave a full report of Dr. Begg's first speech in the General Assembly. It seems fitting that I should present a brief report of his first speech in the General Assembly of the Free Church. There is a happy contrast betwixt the two speeches. The earlier was delivered in a time of conflict, the latter in a time of peace—of peace, that is, within the Assembly itself, though a time of war with abundance of enemies without. The occasion of the later speech was this. A Prussian clergyman, Mr. Hintz, was present in the Assembly, and addressed it at the request of the Moderator. At the close of his hearty and eloquent speech. Mr. Begg of Liberton said—

"At that late hour of the evening it would be unpardonable to detain the meeting by a speech; but it would be equally unpardonable not to return their thanks for the very kind and Christian way in which the last speaker had addressed them. It was a matter of great interest to be addressed by a stranger from a distant land,—a stranger, too, whose language is the language of Luther, and whose country was the cradle of the Reformation. This was likely to be the last address they were to receive from other bodies who sympathised with them; but he would say that there were a multitude of other bodies, who, if they had representatives in Edinburgh, would also express their sympathy with the Free Church. If there had been any of our friends here from America, they would have expressed the great interest which is taken there in the glorious proceedings in which they were engaged. A minister who lately travelled in the United States had informed him that their proceedings

had excited the greatest interest there among the Presbyterian body, and that on his arrival he was regarded as we would regard a man just arrived from Jerusalem. America looks upon Scotland as the head-quarters of Presbyterianism; and one individual from America, who was now in Scotland, had declared that he was sure, if the Free Church would send over a deputation to America, they would express their sympathy, not only in words, but in a way more substantial. He was sure the deputation would raise £100,000 in America, to build Free Presbyterian churches; and if they could spare Dr. Chalmers as one of the deputation, they would get £200,000. He was persuaded that there were numerous bodies in distant lands who had their eyes turned towards Edinburgh, and that there were tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousands throughout our own land, who, though not present to see or hear their proceedings, rejoiced with exceeding great joy at the results. He had travelled through many parts of Scotland. He had met with the shepherds of Eskdale, and with the noble peasantry on the banks of the Don; he had met with the sons of the Covenanters in the south of Scotland, assembled amidst the graves of martyrs, and had they been here, there would not have been merely 4000 present, but 400,000 of the sons of Scotland. Now they were able to say of their Church, which had been so long struggling with difficulties, that she had 'escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowler,' that 'the net had been broken and she had escaped.' The sympathy, besides, was not confined to members of their own Church. He agreed with Mr. Guthrie entirely as to the feelings of other bodies, even though differing in opinion as to an Establishment. They understand that we will not compromise our principles in regard to that matter; and yet hundreds and thousands of them look with deep interest on our proceedings, and are earnest in prayer for our triumph. He was rejoiced at the remark made to himself by an aged Seceder. After addressing a meeting, the old beadle of the church came up stairs to the vestry, and seizing him by the hands, said, 'O man, but that gangs to my heart!' One individual in Edinburgh, a member of the Secession, had promised them £500, and the congregation of a Secession minister, on the south side of this city, had unanimously voted their church for the use of

his congregation and himself, free of all expense. These were cheering and delightful symptoms of better times, and he for one would reciprocate such expressions of kindness with his whole heart. As to the prospect before them, now that they were fairly ashore, and had left the old ship behind them, he saw that it was proposed by the other party to address a letter to the congregations of our former churches, to induce them to remain in the Establishment. Of this letter he would say that they might save themselves the trouble of writing any more letters. He was persuaded that the Queen's letter, or rather the letter of Sir James Graham, was one which all the people of Scotland could read and understand as well as the ministers themselves. The people had had many strange letters addressed to them of late. They had one when the Veto Act was repealed; another when so many able and zealous ministers were driven out from their church courts; another when solemn depositions by the Church were at once reversed; and the most solemn of all, when 400 ministers left the tabernacle of their fathers and assembled in this place. Another letter would be when these ministers would be found leaving their hallowed manses, the homes of their fathers, leaving their churches, and the churchyards where are deposited the bones of their nearest and dearest relatives; and still another, when they see the hireling intruded into the churches and the manses, trampling under foot the crown of the Lord Jesus Christ as he presses forward. They may save themselves the trouble of writing letters to the people; —they can read those which have been already sent them. We may send letters too; but our first duty is to evangelise the country; and in order to accomplish this, to call forth the liberality of the people. He had no fear of the people's liberality towards the Free Church. But he was aware that there were many of their friends, who, being at first somewhat incredulous, made promises of future support to the Free Church, to be performed when the Disruption actually took place. Giving so much at the time, they promised to increase their subscriptions when the protesting ministers came out;— a sort of promissory note, payable at a certain time. These notes are now past due; let us make the demand on the acceptors, and make them pay for their incredulity, by paying twice the sum they had promised. But we must not

confine ourselves to Scotland; we must make an irruption into the kingdom of England. The gentlemen who addressed them the night before had told them to go to England. It was his opinion they had been too long in crossing the Tweed. Let us do so now. We want money, and the English have plenty of money. England has overturned our poor Church, and ought to help us. He hoped that many of England's sons would see the extent of the injury their countrymen had done to Scotland, and that they would now exhibit their willingness to make a munificent offering to build up and repair the broken-down walls. The approach of the enemy, besides, might be looked for from the south; and as Hannibal was met before he reached Rome, so ought we to meet the enemy on the south of the Tweed. Puseyism was threatening an invasion. It has reached the vicinity of the ear of the Queen; it has reached the ear of the Prime Minister; it has seized upon the schools, entered the universities, found its way to the bench of bishops, is predominant in many parts of England; and woe to us if it become predominant over the country. Presbyterianism is its greatest antagonist power. Their friends the Wesleyans were not able, single-handed, to fight the battle of Christian principle, or to give such effective opposition as Presbyterians could. The Synod[1] of Laud had fallen before the banner of the Covenant; and Puseyism may yet be destined to fall before the reformed Presbyterianism of Scotland. The question in which they were engaged was not a Scottish question; it was one interesting to the world, a question of eternal truth, a question of a third Reformation. The first Reformation was the Word of God against the infallibility of popes; the second, against the infallibility of kings; and the third, against the infallibility of judges. The principles are the same. They are based on the authority of the Word of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head in all things over the Church His body. They were bound in self-defence, and in the discharge of their duty to their great Head, to go through all the neighbouring kingdom, and to nail on the door of every cathedral, and of every parish church, their testimony for Christ's crown and Christ's supremacy; and in discharging this duty in a spirit of prayerful dependence on Him whom we acknowledge as the

[1] Qu. "Standard?"—T. S.

Church's only Head, we shall have the blessing of God upon our labours, and universal good may be expected to result from the mighty movement."

This speech could scarcely fail to be regarded as virtually an assent on Dr. Begg's part to a proposal that he should be one of those who should be sent as deputies to England. But however strong was his will to comply with such a proposal, it is manifest that in his case the difficulties in the way of his leaving home were specially great. With so large and important a congregation, with a virtual translation from a rural to a city charge—for I presume that the removal of the Liberton congregation and its minister to Newington had been really, if not formally, resolved on—it was in the highest degree desirable that Dr. Begg should be absent from his own pulpit as little as possible. Yet in the state of feeling which then prevailed, congregations were willing to make sacrifices for the general good, and accordingly we do find that Dr. Begg was able to do some service in the way indicated. Opponents of course attributed it to a spirit of rivalry; and it is not for me to say that inferior motives might not be mingled with the highest. But that the highest were prevalent it seems to be the height of uncharitableness to doubt. The Free Church congregations were largely imbued with the spirit of those of whom it is recorded: "They were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."

Probably no one who will read this volume is ignorant that the General Assembly of the Free Church had two meetings in 1843, that in Edinburgh in May, and an extra one in Glasgow in October. At the later meeting the report of a committee on deputations was given in by Dr. Tweedie. It contains most gratifying statements as to the success of the deputations to England. The following paragraph indicates the part taken in them by Dr. Begg:—

"Soon after the deputation now mentioned had proceeded to the north (of England), another proceeded further south. Mr. Begg, with D. M. M. Crichton, Esq., visited York, London, Bristol and Bath, where the interest in the cause was so great that the largest edifices in the different places could not more than contain the auditories. At the same period the Rev. Dr. Gordon proceeded to London, and nine sermons were preached there on the same Sabbath, by him, Mr. Begg, and Mr. Burns of London Wall, after which, collections, amounting to £400, were made in favour of the Free Church. . . . New calls for deputations were received, to some of which the Committee could not respond as they desired. So urgent, however, were the friends in Manchester for a second deputation, that Dr. Buchanan of Glasgow, Dr. Cooke of Belfast, Mr. Guthrie and Mr. Begg, with Messrs. Crichton, Handyside, Meldrum and Anderson, were appointed to return to it. Two very large and enthusiastic meetings were held in that town. On one Sabbath, collections were made in thirty-five places of worship, and in that town upwards of £4000 has been raised in aid of our cause."

Dr. Tweedie having given in his report, its adoption was moved by Dr. Begg himself in an interesting speech, in which he not only gave a lively account of the cordial reception everywhere given to the deputies, but also insisted on the importance of leavening the mind and heart of England with the principles whose maintenance had led to the Disruption, all the more because they would have to look to the British Parliament, a great majority of whose members are Englishmen, for redress of the wrong which some Scottish landed proprietors were endeavouring to inflict on the Free Church by the refusal of sites.[1] "I may mention," he said, —"and I am now in the position of an eye-witness—that the deepest, the most profound, and in many respects the most

[1] On the subject of the refusal of sites by the Duke of Sutherland there is published, in the *Witness* of 29th November 1843, a long letter from Dr. Begg. Happily it is not necessary to revive this controversy, since, although there may be still an occasional instance of the imposition of unreasonable terms by a wrong-headed proprietor, anything like the systematic site-refusing of the Disruption era is now an impossibility.—T. S.

marvellous, interest has been excited all over England by the events that have occurred in this country. The fall of an Establishment—the disruption of a National Church—these were events fitted to arrest the attention of the world. But I have reason to believe that there were other circumstances which paved the way to this universal interest." In this connection he referred especially to the representations of the Covenanters given by Sir Walter Scott. "One of the objects of that celebrated man was to vilify our Presbyterian ancestors; but instead of accomplishing that object, the universal effect upon the Christian people of England of the efforts of that mighty genius had been to convince them that our Presbyterian ancestors were men who suffered for the truth of God. I spoke with one eminent clergyman on this very subject. I said to him, 'What makes you take such a deep interest in the concerns of the Free Church?' He said, 'I have long taken an interest in the Church of Scotland, and I am convinced that you, the men who have left the Establishment, are in the right, and that solely because I had read "Old Mortality." I see that you are the true successors of the men there described.' Now I say that it is singular that Sir Walter Scott should have become one of the pioneers of the Free Church of Scotland. He hoped that ministers would not object to go on the deputations which it was proposed to send. No doubt it was a hardship to go; but the object was of paramount importance; and he was sure that there was not a man who had been in England before, who would not be ready to go again."

In the middle of December a great meeting was held in Edinburgh on the subject of these English deputations. The reader will be pleased to have presented to him a few characteristic fragments from Dr. Begg's speech on that occasion: —"I was well aware, from having visited England before, of the ignorance which prevailed among multitudes of English people in regard to the state of Scotland. I believe there are

many English people who scarcely know that the Scotch speak the English tongue, and who imagine that there is no dress seen but the kilt after crossing the Tweed. There is a gentleman now on this platform who was lately preaching in an English district; and one lady said to another, 'Let us go and hear the Scotchman preach.' Well, they did go, expecting to hear a Gaelic sermon; and when they heard him, the same lady said, 'That man is not a Scotchman, he speaks English!'" "There is another prevailing idea in England, that Presbyterians are all Socinians, or at least in the near neighbourhood of Socinianism. A member of one of our deputations, who has just returned, mentioned to me that, on one occasion, a very excellent individual took him aside, and quietly said, 'We will help you to build churches, but take care they don't fall into the hands of the Socinians.'" "I learned by accident that in one town we visited, not only was the meeting crowded, but the theatre was emptied. I learned this from a gentleman with whom I travelled in a coach next day, who told me that he had arrived at York the previous evening, and to amuse himself went to the theatre after dinner—the more shame to him—but found it quite empty. He then walked up the street to a place called the De Grey Rooms, where there was a great crowd assembled, and having forced his way to the door, he heard two Scotchmen speak, who told some of the most marvellous things he had ever heard in his life. 'What had these Scotchmen to do in England?' he asked. I proceeded, as quietly as I could, to tell him that they had a great deal to do in England; and from less to more we proceeded to talk on the general question, when he remarked, 'I rather think that Sir Robert Peel had been ill-informed on this matter.' I observed that I certainly thought he had." "There was a tradesman in Manchester who had gathered together as much money as was sufficient to purchase a suit of clothes. It so happened, however, unfortunately for this poor man and his

tailor, that he came under the eloquence of either Mr. Crichton or Mr. Guthrie—a very dangerous influence, you will all admit. The result was that this man emptied all his pockets into the plate, and resolved to buy a suit of clothes at another time."

In the same Glasgow Assembly, with which we have been occupied, Dr. Begg moved the adoption of a report given in by Dr. Cunningham, on the mode of electing ministers and office-bearers. In his speech on this subject he took occasion to advocate the right of female communicants to vote in such elections. This was a subject on which, at that time, there was considerable variety of opinion; and it is noteworthy that some of Dr. Begg's special friends—notably Mr. James Gibson (afterwards Professor Gibson of Glasgow)—very strongly repudiated his views. The matter was not decided by the Assembly. A subsequent Assembly gave effect to the views which Dr. Begg was the first to propound in the Free Church.

From occasional notices in the newspapers of the day, it appears that upon Dr. Begg devolved a large share of the extra work which the Disruption necessitated, as the opening of new churches, introducing new ministers, and preaching to congregations which had not yet been able to procure a stated ministry. Such services as these he rendered ungrudgingly, even when advancing years made them somewhat burdensome to him, and it is not surprising that a large share of them fell to his lot in his days of comparative youth. But it was to the Newington congregation that he gave his strength, the sweat of his brow and of his brains. He would not offer unto God that which cost him nothing. It is stated in his Autobiography that for many years he laboriously committed all his sermons to memory. And in pastoral work he was no sluggard. And he had his reward. It is not usual for a man to retain the unvarying attachment of so large a con-

gregation for so long a time; yet he did retain it, although in his later years his state of health constrained him greatly to diminish—indeed, almost to cease—his pastoral visitation of the members of the congregation. They knew that his lack of such service was constrained, and was a matter of regret to him as well as to them, and when he was able to visit them, he did it heartily. The following extract from a letter addressed to me by one of his elders needs no comment:—"In this connection I shall ever gratefully remember his kindness towards a member of my own family, who, for health's sake, was for a short time in the spring of 1880 residing at Moffat. Although in the seventy-second year of his age, the Doctor, unsolicited, went thither to see him. For two days Dr. Begg stayed at one of the hotels, and spent much of the time with his young friend, as well as with one of his elders who happened to be there at the same time. The Doctor, I believe, had never been in Moffat since the day he passed through it on his way to his first charge at Maxwelltown; what impelled him to pay the visit I refer to, whether it was a feeling of friendship or a sense of duty, matters not. It was a most kindly Christian act, and reveals a feature in Dr. Begg's character which strangers did not think he possessed." It should be noted that the distance between Edinburgh and Moffat is fully sixty miles.

CHAPTER XXV.

ORGANISING OF THE FREE CHURCH—AND OF THE NEWINGTON CONGREGATION.

THE organisation of the Free Church within a few months of the Disruption was a marvellous achievement. No doubt considerable preparations had been made; but under great disadvantages on two accounts. Up till the last the hope had not altogether been abandoned that a *modus vivendi* might yet be found. The preparations had therefore to be made for an event which, it was still hoped, might not occur. And then, the preparations had generally to be made in secret. The *refusal* of a piece of land for the site of a church, in the event of its being needed, might, in certain favourable circumstances, be secured. But beyond this, in almost every case, it would have been unwise and unsafe to go. The Free Church, therefore, came into existence without almost any preparation being made for her advent. And yet it was essential that she should forthwith appear occupying the place which was assigned her, and vigorously doing the work which her hand found to do. In order to this a stupendous amount of labour had to be gone through—labour which required a rare combination of energy and wisdom. It is not surprising that there was no lack of energy; for the people were stirred up to extraordinary zeal, and needed the rein far more than the spur. More remarkable, to one looking back on the doings of those days, was the extreme judiciousness of almost all that was done. I do not say that no mistakes were made. In some cases arrangements were made which

admirably served a temporary purpose, but which had to be superseded after that purpose was accomplished. But to a very large extent we are at this day rejoicing in the singularly judicious arrangements made by men whom the world generally regarded as unpractical zealots, carried away by unreasoning and uncalculating enthusiasm. When God will have His tabernacle constructed in the wilderness, He fills Bezaleel with the Spirit of God not only in respect of knowledge and all manner of workmanship, and to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all manner of cunning workmanship;—but also, and primarily, in respect of wisdom and understanding (Exod. xxxv. 30–33).

Of course, the great principle of the division of labour was brought into requisition for the accomplishment of this great work—a principle as applicable to religious as to secular work. That principle demanded that each man should have that portion of the work assigned him which he was best able to undertake. Whether by the design of others, or by self-knowledge and special taste, we find Dr. Begg from the first applying himself to the regulation of one particular department of finance. Some years before this, and in connection with the Established Church, he had taken special interest in the subject of seat-rents, which had been unwarrantably imposed in many places, especially in the cities and large towns, but to some extent even in country parishes. This was manifestly inconsistent with the essential idea of an Established Church, whose function undoubtedly is to put all classes of the community on an equal footing in respect of the right to a share in the ministrations of the parish minister. But it was vindicated by the plea of necessity, on account of the inadequacy of the endowments. And doubtless the endowments were in many cases inadequate; but it did not follow that this was the proper mode of supplementing them. All the parishioners were equally entitled to the

public and the private services of the parish minister. It was contrary to the whole spirit and genius of the Establishment to virtually exclude from the public services, and by consequence from the private also, a large and important section of the parishioners, who legally had the same rights with their richer fellow-parishioners, and in all right judgment had a prior claim, to their ministrations. The insufficiency of the accommodation, and the legal difficulties thrown in the way of its increase, combined with the inadequacy of the endowment to effect the exclusion of the poor from their own parish churches. In few cases, perhaps in none, was the exclusion formal or absolute, but in all cases where seat-rents were imposed, it was virtual. In most cases—perhaps in all—there was a certain proportion of "free-seats;" but these were uniformly such as no one would pay rent for. They were in remote corners which the preacher's voice could not reach, or they were under deep galleries and were shrouded in darkness; or they were behind massive pillars impermeable by light and sound. And then, moreover, the stigma of pauperism was attached to their occupancy. Such was the state of matters in multitudes of places when Dr. Begg appeared on the field as the uncompromising assailant of the system.

I have before me three pamphlets[1] which he wrote and published on the subject before the Disruption. They are strikingly illustrative of what I have ventured to say in a previous chapter regarding the merits and the defects of Dr.

[1] Their titles are the following:—

1. "Seat-Rents brought to the Test of Scripture, Law, Reason, and Experience; or, The Spiritual Rights of the People of Scotland vindicated against Modern Usurpations, both within and without the Establishment; with a special explanation of the case of Edinburgh; and an Appendix, containing extracts from the Records of Kirk-Sessions and other Church Courts, in regard to the allocation of Seats in the Ancient Free Churches of Scotland. By the Rev. James Begg, A.M., Minister of the Parish of Liberton (second thousand), Edinburgh, 1838."

2. "The Antiquity of Church Extension; with the Methods by which it was Promoted by the Church of Scotland nearly Two Hundred years ago; inter-

Begg's power of conducting a controversy. Seat-rents are simply and absolutely wrong. This is *quod est demonstrandum.* And in my humble judgment he does demonstrate it. But then many of his arguments in support of his theme are, as I think, inept through the overlooking of important distinctions. Thus, for example, he dwells with great earnestness, and repeatedly returns to the text Isa. lv. 1: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and *he that hath no money;* come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk *without money and without price.*" In his treatment of this and other similar texts, he entirely overlooks the obvious distinction between the *evangelistic,* to which they properly refer, and the *pastoral,* to which they are certainly not applicable directly, if at all. Then he is triumphantly destructive, but makes little or no attempt at construction. Seat-rents are wrong and must be abolished! All true, one might say; but what are we to put in their place? To this very obvious question I do not observe that he adverts. But, notwithstanding their defects, these pamphlets seem to me to be excellent specimens of controversial discussion, indicating in their every sentence intensity of conviction and much power of clear and forcible statement. It may not be out of place to say further that in their structure they are cast in the same mould with all his speeches and writings to the last. They consist of a lively but unadorned statement of the argument, without any manifestation of a desire either to repeat or to avoid repetition, and a candid statement of opposing views, and then they end with an eloquent peroration, founded generally upon one or other of the most glowing passages of the prophetic writings, or of the Psalms. In long

spersed with Remarks adapted to the Present Time. With an Appendix. By the Rev. James Begg, A.M., Minister of the Parish of Liberton. Edinburgh, 1838."

3. "THE SEAT-RENT QUESTION. The Duty of the Friends of the Church of Scotland, in Consequence of the Judgment of the Lord Ordinary in the Case of the Tolbooth Kirk-Session *v.* the Magistrates of Edinburgh. By the Rev. James Begg, Minister of Liberton. Edinburgh, 1839."—T. S.

subsequent years I heard him deliver innumerable speeches. They differed sufficiently from one another in respect of their matter, as referring to a great variety of subjects; but they were singularly uniform in their structure.

It may perhaps be deemed not altogether out of place to introduce here a few characteristic passages from these early productions of our author's pen—specimen bricks from a goodly building. The following seems to me to be happily characteristic of the author's eloquence; although I have no doubt that the purist in composition would charge it with mixture of metaphors and other offences against his conventional rules:—

"Oh just consider in the light of Scripture what a consummation of wretchedness it is for a poor man to be driven from the House of God! He toils all the week down in the depths of wretchedness; and still that would be little, if, like Lazarus, he could look forward to all the glories of a better land beyond the grave. But if, when the Sabbath comes round—that day of holy rest—the desire to take with him his little children in his hand, and forget his cares, and lay aside his sorrows for a season, and ascend the mount of ordinances, that he may hear of Him who clothes the lilies, and feeds the ravens, and hears even the young lions when they cry, and who earnestly invites the poor and the weary to come to Him that they may obtain rest—if he desires to hear

> 'How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed—
> How He who bore in heaven the second name
> Had not on earth whereon to lay His head,'—

if he longs to go up to the spiritual Pisgah, that he may see the land of promise at a distance, and hear the voice of psalms ascending in sweet melody to heaven, like the voice of angels in that land where the tears are wiped away from every eye; oh, is it not cutting, is it not fearful to think that whilst God from above is entreating this poor man to ascend this hill of consolation—whilst the Spirit and the Bride are saying, Come—whilst angels and spirits redeemed are re-echoing the invitation, some fellow-worm is standing at the

foot of the hill, and with his obstructions and his demands is driving the poor man back to his wretchedness again!"

Or take the following passage:—

"Under the ancient system of Popery, from a man's cradle to his grave he was beset with demands. A fee at his baptism; a fee at his marriage; a fee at confession; a fee at mass; a fee when sick; a fee when dying; when buried, a fee! Our ancestors swept away at once the whole of these charges, and introduced a free and untaxed gospel. They administered baptism for nothing, marriage for nothing, the Lord's Supper for nothing, the preaching of the Word for nothing, and gave a place in the churchyard and attended funerals for nothing. The Church of Scotland was truly the poor man's church. But mark, when the magistrates seized the power, they not only introduced fees again; but they introduced them at the very place where they were most certain to derange and render inefficient the whole economy —at the very place where Popery, with her many demands, was too cunning to introduce any change whatever, viz., at the very threshold. She made the trap wide open for the victims to enter, and it was only after they had fairly entered that she proceeded to fleece them. She knew that when a man was married he would be willing to pay; when he became a father he would give his money; when his conscience was to be unburdened he would give liberally; when he was about to die, he would even part with all; but at the threshold all was, and still is, free in Popish countries, 'The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.'"

Once more:—

"Let us hear then the conclusion of the whole matter. As ministers of the everlasting gospel, it is our highest duty to break down every obstacle in the way of its universal diffusion, that it may everywhere 'have free course (or run) and be glorified.' As the dew of heaven falls equally on the fields of rich and poor—as the light of heaven presses for admittance into the windows of the humblest cottage, as well as into the palaces of kings—as the mighty sea disdains

not to bear on its bosom the meanest barque of the poor fisherman as well as the proudest and most gallant ship—and as the earth and ocean give forth their exhaustless stores of human food, to fill with plenty the habitations of honest industry, as well as the halls of greatness;—so the Gospel was designed equally to enlighten, comfort, sanctify, and carry to heaven the poorest beggar and the prince of a hundred provinces. We are not straitened here by God, any more than we are in the boundless exuberance of nature, for 'with Him there is no respect of persons.'"

I stated that while, in my judgment, Dr. Begg frames an absolutely unanswerable plea in opposition to seat-rents, he does not very definitely state what he would substitute for them, how he would provide a substitute for the revenue which they yielded. But it is not difficult to see what was his own view of the matter. It would appear that there were some towns in which the corporations were absolutely making a gain of the churches, realising more from the seat-rents than they paid to the ministers, and adding the surplus to the ordinary revenue of the town. In such cases there was no question as to what ought to have been done. Then there were other cases—of which I understand Edinburgh to have been one—in which valuable ecclesiastical property, or property which had become very valuable, had been handed over to the corporation on condition that they should maintain the Church. In such cases also there should have been no dispute as to the course to be adopted. With respect to all other cases, Dr. Begg took the only ground that an advocate of Church Establishments can take, that the Church should be supported either by voluntary offerings or by increased endowments.

The problem had to be approached from another side when it related to a Church disestablished and disendowed, and with no prospect of obtaining any endowment. It was further complicated by the fact that the previously existing dissenters —certainly most of them, and so far as I know, all—had

adopted the method of seat-rents as the principal means for raising the money necessary for paying the stipends of their ministers. The Free Church was happily saved by its SUSTENTATION FUND from the temptation to adopt this method to its full extent. But every congregation required to raise a considerable sum, for the supplement of its minister if possible, and certainly for the defraying of necessary expenses connected with the decent conduct of public worship, while in very many cases there were feu-duties to be paid, and in not a few there was a considerable amount of debt upon the buildings, bearing a high interest. In these circumstances Dr. Begg produced a short but masterly pamphlet,[1] in which he repeats and enforces his arguments against seat-rents, and strongly recommends the method of church-door collections. He gives statements of what might reasonably be expected from various classes of congregations. As the matter is one of permanent interest, I shall transfer two specimens of these estimates, the highest and the lowest:—

Take a city congregation of 1000,					Suppose 500 people, and that				
50	gave	1s. 6d.	£3	15 0	10	gave	1s. 0d.	£0	10 0
50	„	1s. 0d.	2	10 0	20	„	0s. 6d.	0	10 0
100	„	0s. 6d.	2	10 0	100	„	0s. 2d.	0	16 8
100	„	0s. 4d.	1	13 4	200	„	0s. 1d.	0	16 8
300	„	0s. 2d.	2	10 0	70	„	0s. 0½d.	0	2 11
100	„	0s. 1d.	0	8 4	100	„	nothing	0	0 0
50	„	0s. 0½d.	0	2 1					
250	„	nothing	0	0 0	500	Weekly revenue,		£2	16 3
1000	„	Weekly revenue,	£13	8 9		Annual	„	£146	5 0
		Annual „	£698	15 0					

I am well aware how easy it is to make such estimates,

[1] "Reasons why no Seat-Rents should be in the Free Church, with Practical Directions for getting on better without them. By James Begg, Minister of the Free Church, Newington." The copy before me bears no date; but in the catalogue of the Library of the New College, the date 1843 is inserted in brackets. This was probably done on the authority of Dr. Begg himself.—T. S

and how seldom the actual result comes up to what seems a most moderate expectation. I am quite sure that Dr. Begg's expectation, as stated in these last two cases, *was* most moderate. But there was the great difficulty of inveterate custom to contend with. For generations in the Established Church the weekly collections had been for the poor of the parish. With the splendid system of management by the Kirk-Sessions a very small sum sufficed for this end, and the habit had been formed by the great body of the people of putting a half-penny or a penny into the plate or the "ladle." Then the dissenters, as we have seen, regarded the collections as merely supplementary to the seat-rents, and were quite satisfied if their amount sufficed to defray minor and incidental expenses. Thus the people of the Free Church, before they could do justice to Dr. Begg's method, would have had to get over at once the hereditary influence of generations in the Establishment and the example of their fellow-dissenters all around them. Many a time, therefore, in after years, did Dr. Begg, with mingled humour and sadness, quote the text, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil."

Many Free Church congregations, I believe, adopted the seat-rent system from the outset. Others—of which, if I mistake not, Newington itself was one—subsequently fell back upon the method of supplementing the weekly collections by half-yearly voluntary "seat-offerings." These, I should suppose, however unobjectionable in themselves, would be in danger of degenerating into virtual seat-rents. The great desideratum is, that Christian people should adopt the scriptural and reasonable method of systematic or proportionate giving, each man on the receipt of his income, daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly or half-yearly, solemnly consecrating a certain percentage of it for religious and charitable uses, and holding himself responsible for the distribution of the fund thus formed, in the capacity of a steward and not of an owner. I am sure that the labourer

with a pound a week could have more real comfort from 18s. than he could otherwise have from 20s., if he conscientiously consecrated a tithe of his earning to the service of God; while the merchant would have fewer unfavourable balances if he made the God of providence virtually a partner with himself in the conduct of his business and the disposal of his profits; and the landowner or capitalist would not be more likely to have to diminish his personal expenditure under constraint, because he had voluntarily restricted it under a sense of responsibility to the Giver of all good. I know that all this may be stigmatised as superstition and enthusiasm. To me it seems a simple corollary from the most elementary truths of natural and revealed religion, of Theism and of Christianity. It appears to be one of the most practically important subjects to which the attention of Christians in these days can be directed. To it the principle of the oft-quoted and much-varied epigram regarding the distribution of a lawyer's time seems to be strictly applicable:—

> "Six hours to law, to soothing slumbers seven,
> Ten to the world allot, and all to heaven;"

so here, nine-tenths of our income to the maintenance of ourselves and our households, according to our station; one-tenth to religion and charitable objects; and all the ten-tenths to the glory of God; as it is written: "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31).

It scarcely needs be said that no time was lost, and no diligence was spared, in the organisation and equipment of the congregation by the election and ordination of office-bearers. From the Session-Records, to which I have had access through the kindness of the present Session—for which I take this occasion of thanking them—it appears that four elders of the Liberton Church and four of the

Newington Church (the minister of which remained in connection with the Establishment) attached themselves to the Free Church, and were forthwith with their minister constituted into a Kirk-Session. At their meeting on the 15th of December 1843, "The Kirk-Session having taken into their consideration the recommendation of the late General Assembly at Glasgow, that deacons should be elected in every congregation of the Free Church, RESOLVED that eight deacons should be elected for the congregation, and appointed their Moderator to intimate this resolution to the congregation on Sabbath first, and to request the members in full communion to give in sealed lists of twelve persons qualified for this office, on or before Tuesday, the 9th of January, that out of the number the Kirk-Session may, if they see cause, select eight whom they shall ask to undertake the office of deacon." As the result of this voting it was found that large numbers of votes had been given for each of *thirteen* members, whereupon "The Kirk-Session took the whole subject into their consideration, and resolved to ask the whole of these gentlemen to accept of the office of deacon, and empowered the Moderator to serve an edict on as early a Sabbath as possible, with a view to the ordination of such of them as may be found willing to accept, as soon as their answers are received." In point of fact, however, only six of the thirteen consented to accept office; and they were ordained on the 4th of February 1844. At a meeting of elders and deacons on the following day, "The Meeting having taken into consideration the fact that a large portion of the congregation reside in the country district, and that five of the newly-ordained deacons reside in the town, whilst only one of them resides in the country, RESOLVED that it is proper that there should be a new election of four deacons for the country district of the congregation. The Moderator was accordingly requested," &c. Six were elected, of whom only three agreed to accept

office. Thus the office-bearers were eight elders and nine deacons—too small a number certainly for so large a congregation; but yet no despicable band of good men and true. Before the end of 1844 their numbers were doubled by fresh elections. I may say in passing, that all his days Dr. Begg regarded the office-bearers of Newington with singular affection and pride, honestly believing that there were none like them elsewhere.

CHAPTER XXVI.

INVESTMENT OF CHURCH PROPERTY — SABBATH SCHOOLS — IRISH MARRIAGES — NEWINGTON CONGREGATION—ROMANISM—PSALMODY.

I HAVE already expressed delight and astonishment at the wisdom oftentimes displayed by the fathers of the Free Church in the midst of their exuberant zeal. I believe that every intelligent, and certainly every pious man will acknowledge that the finger of God was in this, and that these men received both their zeal and their discretion as a good gift coming "down from above, even from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning." But instrumentally there were some men whose zeal—not less fervent than that of others—was more tempered by discretion than that of others, and who were specially employed, not to restrain but to direct. Amongst these I am safe in saying that Dr. Begg held a foremost place. A notable example of this occurred in 1844.

The Disruption Assembly (May 1843) received, and unanimously approved, a report of a committee, which was submitted without remark by Mr. Murray Dunlop, which contained the following paragraph:—"Next in order to this should come a Board of Trustees, as the legal hand to hold all realised property connected with the Church, as places of worship, &c., to be vested in them at as early a period as circumstances will admit of; in whose names, also, all the funds collected should be lodged in the bank." The matter was again brought up in a report submitted to the Glasgow

Assembly (Oct. 1843) by Mr. John Hamilton, advocate. In the report it is said, "The Committee presume that the Assembly will not rise without taking steps to forward the important object of nominating a body of general trustees, in whose names, according to the Act of last Assembly, the whole places of worship, manses, school-houses, and other real property belonging to the Church, may be feudally vested. The propriety and necessity of this step was very strongly felt by last Assembly when it passed the enactment which now forms the law of the Church on the subject; and the obvious wisdom of the arrangement has commended it to cordial approbation in all quarters." The plan is afterwards characterised as "an arrangement which has been adopted with perfect success by the Wesleyan Methodists in England, by the Calvinistic Methodists in Wales, and by the Presbyterian and other churches in the United States of America."

In this are manifest two great evils, the one relating to the manner, the other to the matter, of the legislation. As to the former, much may be said and admitted in excuse, but nothing in justification, of such hasty and informal legislation. So far as appears, the proposal was made in a report which was submitted without remark. Its approval was moved equally without remark, and, so far as appears from the report, was not even seconded, but was carried by acclamation. This would have been altogether wrong, even if the matter had involved no interests of any considerable importance. But the interests involved were immense; no less than the investment in trustees, with absolutely undefined responsibilities, of property whose value was soon to amount to several millions of pounds sterling!

Dr. Begg was the first to call the attention of the Church to the subject. On the 3d January 1844 he proposed, in the Presbytery of Edinburgh, an overture for transmission to the Assembly, to the effect, *first*, that there should be no legislation by the Assembly otherwise than in accordance with the

provisions of the Barrier Act;[1] and *secondly*, that the subject of the investment of the property should not be decided on without the most careful consideration, and consultation with other bodies. Dr. Begg's speech in support of this overture is, in my humble judgment, one of the most masterly that he ever delivered. He set out by apologising for the Assembly's having acted in a great emergency in a way which would not have been admissible in ordinary circumstances. "As the Presbytery will observe, the overture points, first, to the observance of the standing law of the Church, called the Barrier Act, to the effect that no measure shall be reckoned a law of the Church till it has received the approbation of a majority of Presbyteries. I am quite aware that in the circumstances in which we have recently been placed, it was perhaps not possible always to observe this Act to the letter. Things required to be done, and done too in a hurry; and it was necessary that the Church should act, and act promptly, without the slow process of consulting the various Presbyteries. At the same time, as all history and experience proves, it is a danger to which all public bodies are exposed, after a Disruption such as that through which we have passed, that the standing laws of the body are liable to be lost sight of, and something like a despotism set up in their room. Therefore, while I think that much of what has taken place heretofore was probably to a great extent unavoidable, I hope that, as soon as possible, we shall fall back on all our old plans, and that next Assembly will revive the old manner of procedure, recognising this as a rule, that no General Assembly has a right of itself

[1] It seems almost strange to a Scottish ecclesiastic to have to tell what the *Barrier Act* means. The following is from the *Free Church Manual*:—

"By that Act, passed in 1697, the rule has been fixed, that no Acts can be passed by the Assembly, so as to be binding rules and constitutions for the Church, until they have first been passed by the Assembly, simply as Overtures, and transmitted in that form to the several Presbyteries for their opinion, and until the consent of a majority of Presbyteries has been obtained." —T. S.

to assume legislative power,—that it is altogether and solely an administrative body, that so also are all its committees,—that the only legislative power in the Church is that of the Presbyteries;[1] that these Presbyteries have legislative power only in things spiritual, and that neither General Assembly nor Presbyteries have any power whatever in things temporal."

As to the matter itself, it was shown that Mr. Hamilton's statement that such a plan was acted on by other bodies, was wholly erroneous, and that the measure was fraught with the greatest danger. "First, I would object to the concentration of such a mass of property in a few individuals, as having a natural tendency to despotic power. I say if you invest in some ten or twenty men some two or three millions of property, you raise up a very powerful and a very dangerous body. Secondly, I object to vesting the property as proposed, because I think it impossible to get any given body of men of whose steadfastness you can be assured. If such a plan, for instance, had been proposed some six or seven years ago, in whom would you have vested the property? Would it not probably have been in such men as Mr. Colquhoun, or Sir George Sinclair, or even perhaps Sir Charles Ferguson — men, in short, a great proportion of whom are now opposed to our principles? And every one

[1] I venture to express strongly my judgment that this statement is erroneous. The Presbyteries of themselves have absolutely no legislative power. The General Assembly has legislative power, but under certain limitations and restrictions, the chief of which is the veto of the Presbyteries. A legislative enactment is proposed in the General Assembly. If it be approved by a majority, it is sent down, in terms of the Barrier Act, to Presbyteries, who must report their judgment upon it to next Assembly. If it be not approved by a majority of Presbyteries, the Assembly cannot pass it; but by whatever majority of Presbyteries it may be approved, the Assembly is at full liberty to pass or not to pass it. When it is passed it is in these terms: "The General Assembly, with consent of a majority of Presbyteries, enact and ordain," &c. Surely then the legislative power in the Church is that of the General Assembly, while the power of *veto* is that of the Presbyteries.—T. S.

knows that a trust-deed is of very little force or value if the trustees who administer it are bent on adapting it to serve their own purposes." The third objection to the proposal was on the disposal of the property in the unhappy event of a disruption of the Church. "I will suppose a case. According to a proposal advocated by several of the politicians, it is likely that, in some shape or other, the Popish priests in Ireland will be offered a bribe in the shape of an endowment. Now, I believe—I have, indeed, no doubt whatever,—that the same parties will be prepared to offer a bribe to the Free Church in the way of an endowment also; and perhaps it would be accepted by a small portion of our ministers. Now, in such a case, the question would immediately arise, To whom does all the property belong: to those who accept the endowment, or to those who refuse it? And, constituted as the Civil Courts are, there cannot be a doubt that they would decide in favour of the men who accepted the endowment, and they might urge plausible enough grounds for so doing. They might say, Why, the Free Church never abandoned the Establishment principle, and here is an endowment offered in the very circumstances which the Free Church deems innocuous, viz., without conditions, and thus they would hand over the property to the few who would accept an endowment, and proceed to turn out all the others, who would form the vast numerical majority, from their own churches and property."

Dr. Candlish, with no great cordiality, however, "seconded the overture, regretting some of the expressions which had been made use of by Mr. Begg, especially the allusion which he had thrown out as to the possibility of a schism in the Free Church. He regretted that the friends of the Church should be pained, and its enemies encouraged, by even the hint of such a thing. Yet, upon the whole, he thought Mr. Begg had done good service to the Church by drawing their attention so pointedly to the matter." Surely this was an

excess of squeamishness on the part of this noble man. The case supposed by Dr. Begg was surely a possible one. The supposing of it could not possibly tend to produce its actual occurrence; and there would be no need of legislation at all on such subjects, provided it could safely be assumed that all matters shall always proceed smoothly and pleasantly. "The law is not made for a righteous man," and legislation would have no place if universal righteousness could be safely postulated. "Mr. Buchanan (Dr. James) said he thought the whole Free Church of Scotland was very much indebted to Mr. Begg for directing their attention, as he had done, to this subject. When the idea of a General Board was first introduced in the General Assembly, he had opposed it as far as he could, and his opinion had only been strengthened and confirmed ever since. He was convinced that it was a most dangerous expedient, and an expedient which every congregation in Scotland ought strenuously to resist." The overture, slightly modified, was unanimously adopted.

The subject was again brought before the Presbytery of Edinburgh by Dr. Candlish, on the 1st of May, when he, with characteristic frankness, said: "My friend Mr. Begg, sometime ago—and I am sure he will excuse me for saying so, as I thought at that time somewhat prematurely—brought the subject, which had been remitted by the General Assembly to the Special Commission, under the notice of the Presbytery. At the same time, I now think that the Church is greatly indebted to Mr. Begg for his calling attention so plainly and fully to the question. His doing so has been, on the whole, I think, beneficial, and we are more likely now to come to a thorough understanding in the matter than, but for Mr. Begg, might have been come to before the Assembly." And he went on to reiterate, in substance, the statements which Dr. Begg had made, and which he had deprecated. Such was Dr. Candlish always; hasty perhaps in coming to a conclusion, but ever ready to admit new light, and ever frank

and generous to acknowledge the meritorious services of an opponent.

The matter came before the Assembly in connection with the Report of the Law Committee, when, on the motion of Dr. Candlish, a committee was appointed, with Dr. Begg as its convener, "to consider the trust-deed, the deliverances of Presbyteries upon it, and the overtures connected with it, and to report to a future diet of this Assembly." Accordingly, on the 27th of May, Dr. Begg reported on behalf of this committee, and it was unanimously agreed that the churches, manses, and other property belong to the several congregations, and may be invested by them in any trustees whom they may appoint, and on any terms that they may prescribe. A "Model Trust Deed" was prepared, the adoption of it being left to the option of the congregations, while any material departure from its provisions would be a barrier to a congregation's receiving grants from certain central funds of the Church for repairing, enlarging, or improving the property so invested. The amount of evil prevented, and the amount of good effected, by this action, of which the credit is almost wholly due to Dr. Begg, afford full reason for my devoting so large a space to an account of this matter. True, it is a secular matter; but it was no unimportant charge that was committed to the Levites, Shemaiah the son of Hashub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni, and to Shabbethai and Jozabad of the chief of the Levites, when they "had the oversight of the outward business of the house of God" (Neh. xi. 15, 16).

It were superfluous to say that in the early years of the Free Church Dr. Begg took a large share in the work which then devolved on all men who were able and willing to do it. In the newspapers of the time we find numerous paragraphs intimating that he conducted the service at the opening of this and that new church; that he spoke with his usual eloquence at this and that public meeting; that he begged to acknowledge

receipt of this and that sum of money sent anonymously through the post-office, to be applied to this and that object, or according to his discretion in the interests of the Free Church. In all this he did merely as did all his brethren who occupied positions of similar prominence. It may be well to give the close of a speech which he delivered at a meeting of "The Edinburgh Sabbath-School Teachers' Union," because it refers to a subject of permanent and increasing importance, and respecting which I suspect that Dr. Begg was supposed to hold views which I am confident that he never held. Perhaps I should say that the meeting was undenominational:—

"The Rev. Mr. Begg rose amidst loud applause. My Lord Provost, it gives me great pleasure to be present on such an occasion as this, and to see you presiding over such a respectable and numerous assemblage of Christians as are now before me. . . . If we look at the question more strictly as regards Sabbath-schools, we will find it divides itself into two parts. There is the congregational Sabbath-school, whose primary object is to teach all the young of the congregation; there are general or local Sabbath-schools, whose object is to teach all young children whatever. This is a distinction which is not so generally regarded as it ought to be. There ought to be a Sabbath-school in connection with each congregation. Every child baptized is a member of the Church. Now what are the means provided for the instruction of these members? Not preaching—although that is important—but Sabbath-schools in connection with the respective congregations to which they belong. Parents should, no doubt, instruct their children; but many parents have neither sufficient opportunities nor the necessary talents for teaching their children thoroughly; and they are entitled, in addition to their own efforts, to the sympathy and assistance of other members of the congregation. I speak not from mere theory; I have for eight years had experience of a congregational Sabbath-school, where there have been a multitude of children taught by a numerous body of teachers every Sabbath morning for an hour before public worship. When I spoke of this while I was in the country, I used to

be told that it might do very well in the country, but that it would not succeed in town; but now I have tried it in town, and found it to succeed even better than before. Our Sabbath-school in my church at Newington has been opened only for a few weeks, and we have already forty teachers, and fully two hundred children. I go on the Sabbath morning, at a quarter to ten o'clock, to see it begun, and there is the church, with the children and teachers, as busy as a beehive. If it be asked what children attend this school? I say the children of all classes in the congregation attend it. I send my own child there among the rest; and I can only say that, from the emulation created, he appears to take a deeper interest in the lessons which he says to his Sabbath-school teacher than in those which he receives at home. . . ."

As indicative of Dr. Begg's far-sightedness, and of his appreciation of the reality of a man's interest in the burning of the house adjoining his own, I must refer, though very briefly, to his action respecting a decision of the House of Lords affecting the validity of Irish Presbyterian Marriages. Lord Lyndhurst had decided that a marriage between an Episcopalian and a Presbyterian is invalid unless performed by an Episcopalian minister. It is of course impossible to overestimate the disastrous effects of this decision in bastardising thousands of people, and unsettling the ownership of an immense amount of property. Dr. Begg brought the matter before the Presbytery of Edinburgh on the 3d April 1844, and was appointed convener of a committee "to correspond with any committee of the Irish General Assembly on this subject, and to adopt all competent means by which to strengthen the hands of our Irish brethren in regaining their just rights, thus vindicating the purity of the ordinance of God in regard to marriage, and promoting the best interests of society in Ireland." The attention of the Scottish public having been thus directed to the subject, a public meeting was held in Edinburgh on the 2d of May. Dr. Begg addressed it in a forcible speech, and "resumed his seat amid enthusiastic applause."

Dr. Begg was a member of the Assembly of 1844, but excepting in the matter which has been already referred to at length—the investment of the property of the Church,—he does not seem to have taken a prominent part in the proceedings. Probably he was exhausted by the arduous labours of the preceding months.

I began this chapter by expressing "delight and astonishment at the wisdom and prudence displayed by the fathers of the Free Church in the midst of their exuberant zeal." A similar tribute is fairly due to the great body of the membership. But it would have been little short of miraculous if there had not been, amongst so many thousands placed in new circumstances, invested with new privileges, and called to the discharge of new duties, some who formed erroneous estimates of their new position. Some of these appear to have been in the Newington congregation; and although they were but few in number, and although no very serious consequences resulted from their action, yet that action could not fail to cause intense pain to a minister who not only loved his congregation and all its members, but who was proud of them. The matter is recorded in the minutes of the Kirk-Session, and in those of the Presbytery, to which the case was referred, in terms of studied generality and vagueness. The reasons of this reticence at the time are obvious. But these reasons do not exist now, as no one survives whose feelings could be hurt by a statement of the facts of the case. These facts I shall therefore state briefly, as I have, with considerable difficulty, ascertained them.

Before and after the Disruption, when it seemed that the whole fund which the Free Church would be able to raise for the sustentation of the ministry would, if equally divided, afford to each minister an income barely sufficient for the support of life, it was again and again said—and by none more heartily than the ministers of large and rich congregations whose members were both able and willing to give

them ample stipends—that there should be a simple and absolute "equal dividend," and that all the ministers should "share and share alike." When the Sustentation Fund was fairly instituted, it was agreed that *it* should be equally divided amongst those entitled to participate in it, while congregations should be at liberty to make arrangements for providing "supplements" for their own ministers. Various checks were proposed to prevent the diversion of an undue proportion of the contributions from the main channel of the general fund into the "lades" of the congregational supplements; but it was thought best to rely on the good feeling and generosity of ministers and congregations. There were some members of the Church, however, who held that the Church was pledged to an equal division of all funds contributed for the support of the ministry. Dr. Begg was not one of these. He held that the Sustentation Fund, equally divided, was essential to the providing of a minimum salary to every minister, and that all the congregations of the Church ought to contribute liberally to that fund. But he held also that what would be a tolerable stipend for one minister would be intolerable for another; that, for example, a city minister had far more calls for expenditure than a minister in a remote district of the country. In this, I believe, he was right in those days; although I suspect that now there is considerable equalisation of expenditure, and in some cases the rural pastor has to meet expenses from which his brethren in cities are free. But the question at present before us is not as to the soundness or unsoundness of Dr. Begg's views, but as to the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the method which he adopted to give effect to them. According to my information the method was this:—The Deacons' Court (of course under his guidance) furnished each collector with two books, in one of which were to be entered subscriptions for the Sustentation Fund, and in the other subscriptions for a Congregational Fund, the surplus of

which, after giving a moderate supplement to the minister, was to be added to the congregation's contribution to the Sustentation Fund. I may notice in passing that this mode of providing a supplement, while it differed in respect of the method of raising the money from that advocated in Dr. Begg's pamphlets on Seat-Rents, agreed with it in the essential principle that all contributions were perfectly voluntary. Some members, and two or three office-bearers of the congregation, were strenuous in the advocacy of an absolutely equal dividend; and of course they were perfectly entitled to hold that view, and to advocate it in a constitutional manner. But they held meetings called by circular, and made speeches of an inflammatory character, charging their minister with greed and rapacity. When this came to Dr. Begg's knowledge, he brought the matter before the Kirk-Session, who, on his suggestion, referred it to the Presbytery for advice. The matter ended in the withdrawal from the congregation of two or three office-bearers and about eighty members. These joined a neighbouring congregation *of the Free Church.* Dr. Begg, who believed them to be good men, although he disapproved their action in this matter, most heartily acquiesced in their reception into that congregation. Before this Dr. Begg—as his custom ever was—wisely or unwisely, had taken the matter to the pulpit, preaching from Gal. v. 13, and the great body of the congregation had warmly sympathised with him. When the disaffected members left, the *Evening Post*, which claimed to be regarded as the organ of the Established Church, exulted over it as a disruption of the Free Church; in consequence of which the *Witness* published a short statement of the facts, which, although differing somewhat from the account which I have given of the occasion of the disturbance, is not inconsistent with that account as to the facts of the case.

Those who left the congregation only made room for others who were waiting for vacant seats; but their withdrawal was

a matter of deep regret to Dr. Begg. So far as I know, it was the first and the last occasion of a breach of harmony betwixt him and any portion of his congregation.

Shortly after this we find Dr. Begg speaking, in two public meetings in Edinburgh, on subjects which ultimately came to occupy much of his thoughts, the advance of Romanism, and the improvement of psalmody. His first utterances on these subjects were in harmony with his last, and with all intermediate ones.

"On Monday night (18th Nov. 1844) a numerous and influential meeting was held in the Music Hall, to receive a deputation from the Irish Presbyterian Church to plead the cause of their Home Mission." After the deputation had addressed the meeting in long and eloquent speeches, Dr. Begg proposed a resolution of thanks to the deputation and of interest in their missionary work. He lamented the progress of Romanism, not in Ireland only, but in England also. "And why is it," he went on to say, "that in Ireland Popery has not only kept its ground, but is attaining such an ascendancy? I believe it may be traced mainly to one great cause, and that is, that the people—the three millions of Irish-speaking Roman Catholics—have not hitherto had the Gospel preached to them in their own tongue. . . . Well, then, it has often occurred to me, that we can assist our Irish friends, not only with money, but with men. Our Gaelic men could soon be taught to preach to the native Irish in a tongue which they could understand. It is not long since Dr. M'Leod thus preached to them at Galway; and I remember well of Dr. Daniel Dewar, celebrated for his great knowledge of Gaelic, as well as for many other things, telling in the General Assembly, that when he preached to the native Irish, they mistook him—a rather equivocal compliment—for a Popish priest."

The other meeting was held in the Waterloo Rooms. Its chief object was to countenance Mr. Mainzer, who was

making most laudable efforts for the formation of musical classes, and generally for the cultivation of sacred music. The meeting was addressed by the Duke of Sutherland and the Marquis of Lorne, as well as other laymen, and by ministers of various denominations. It was moved by the Rev. Mr. Alexander (Dr. Lindsay Alexander), "That every effort should be made to improve the condition of the precentors throughout the country." He said he had no great anxiety to see the class of precentors retained. He thought it would be wise if, instead of intrusting the leading of the music to an instrument composed of muscles and nerves, which was very apt to get disturbed and out of tune, they were to intrust it to substantial wood and metal. This, however, was merely his own opinion." Although this was said jocular and in perfect good nature, it would have been too much to expect that it should be allowed to pass unnoticed by Dr. Begg, to whom it had been assigned to second Dr. Alexander's motion. For reasons which many of my readers will understand and appreciate, I shall give his speech with but little abridgment:—

"Rev. Mr. Begg had great pleasure in seconding the motion; and he cordially concurred in much of the sentiments that had been uttered, particularly in the statements in regard to the great importance of church music, as the only part of sacred worship which would survive the ruins of the world, and last throughout eternity. He was Presbyterian enough, however, to dissent from one sentiment which Mr. Alexander had uttered; he was neither in favour of surplices nor liturgies, nor organs, nor any other innovation whatever from the simple and scriptural customs of their forefathers. But he rejoiced in every effort which was made for the improvement of psalmody, and having attended Mr. Mainzer when he first visited Edinburgh, he had watched his progress since with intense anxiety; and he must state that, in his opinion, Mr. Mainzer had accomplished great things. . . . In regard to precentors, the subject to which this motion refers, there seem to be two evils at present.

The mode of their appointment seems extremely defective, inasmuch as they are generally chosen by persons, many of whom are utterly ignorant of music, so that a man who knows not a note of music, but merely happens to have a good voice, often carries it over the best musician. An ignorant precentor, thus appointed, of course destroys the whole music of the congregation, and thus the evil proceeds from bad to worse. The true remedy for this is to have some sort of musical college or institute for training and testing candidates, and to allow no man to appear before a congregation as precentor who does not bring a diploma or *imprimatur* from this body."

After stating that in electing a precentor for Newington they had taken the judgment of Mr. Hately and Mr. Palmer as to the qualifications of the candidates, he proceeds:—

"The other error adverted to is undoubtedly the miserably low salaries often at present given to precentors. Congregational music will never be what we desire to see it until the precentor is able to devote his whole time to the instruction of the congregation; until he is able to be at all day-schools, Sabbath-schools, and congregational meetings; until he as completely devotes his time to the promotion of the psalmody as the minister does to the promotion of the spiritual interests of the congregation. But of course this implies that his labour shall be properly remunerated, and on this ground I have great pleasure in seconding this motion."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE YEAR 1845—REFUSAL OF SITES—MAYNOOTH—UNIVERSITY TESTS—TOUR IN THE HIGHLANDS—POOR-LAWS—INVERNESS ASSEMBLY—DEATH OF MRS. BEGG.

On the 5th of February 1845, Dr. Begg, in the Presbytery of Edinburgh, moved an overture to the General Assembly on the subject of the refusal of sites. He supported his motion in a speech which his seconder, Dr. Guthrie, characterised as "calm and temperate." This subject will come under our notice ere long. In the meantime I would only say that in all history it would be difficult to find anything that bears more apparently the aspect of judicial blindness than the action of some of the enemies of the Free Church at this time. They might have known that such action as theirs would stir up all the best, and all the worst, and all the intermediate feelings in the hearts of Free Churchmen to stand fast by a cause which was thus persecuted. And the strangest thing about it was that some of the site-refusers were men of high character for integrity and kindness. And then a considerable number of them were themselves dissenters, standing in precisely the same relation to the Established Church which the Free Church maintained towards it. There was, for example, the late Duke of Buccleuch, at once a conscientious dissenter, a model of integrity and kindliness in all the relations of life, and for many years a most resolute site-refuser. What makes the anomaly still more unaccountable is that the persecution seems to have been confined to the one point of the refusal of sites. Dr. Guthrie,

on seconding Dr. Begg's motion, made the following statement, which quite agrees with what I have learned otherwise: "It may seem a little strange that I should take the part of the Duke of Buccleuch so far; but let justice be done to all; and I think it right and fair to state that though His Grace has in these instances refused to grant sites, yet there has been no persecution, so far as I have learned—no persecution of the tenants, cottars, or servants, at Canonbie. I believe that the Duke of Buccleuch's own servants attend the Free Church without suffering in the least by doing so." As Free Churchmen, we have no reason to regret the course that was adopted by these men, for it manifestly tended to the furtherance of our cause; but as patriotic Scotsmen we deeply deplore the suicidal policy which did much to widen the breach, already far too wide, betwixt the different classes of our countrymen, and to accelerate the progress of that revolutionary spirit which threatens sooner or later to bring dire calamities on our land. It is more than insinuated by Dr. Guthrie that the chief instigators of site-refusing were among the clergy of the Established Church;—not, however, the consistent Moderates, some of whom did their best to obtain justice for the Free Church, but men who were among the most strenuous advocates of Free Church views until the hour of trial came. It is no new thing to find that the fiercest enemy is the false friend, that the most virulent persecutor is the renegade.

In the March Commission of this year the subject of the endowment of Maynooth was one of the most important subjects for discussion. It was introduced by Dr. Candlish, seconded by Dr. Begg. In Sir Robert Peel's exposition of the Queen's Speech at the opening of Parliament it had been announced that the Government were to propose an increase of the Maynooth grant; and although it was admitted that it was on this account Mr. Gladstone had withdrawn from the ministry, yet no very decided stand was made in either

House of Parliament against the proposal. There was also very great dissatisfaction felt by many of the friends of Protestantism throughout the country with the action of the Foreign Secretary (the Earl of Aberdeen) in the case of Dr. Kalley in Madeira. It was in these circumstances that the Commission took up the subject. Dr. Candlish frankly admitted that he had no great hope of success in petitioning against the proposed increase of the grant, but held that the Church, as a matter of duty, should make an earnest effort to stay the advance of Romanism and Jesuitism. Dr. Begg took the ground which all through his life he invariably occupied, exposing the folly of those who imagine that Rome has changed, that her persecuting spirit was merely the spirit of a persecuting age, and that she was now actuated by more liberal and enlightened principles. "It used (he said) to be a fashionable thing on the part of many professing Christians to maintain that those persons were alarmists who foretold that Popery was likely again to obtain ascendancy in this country. It was a favourite idea with some of the best and most intelligent men in this country, that Popery was likely to obtain the ascendancy; but this was scouted at the time, and I believe is scouted still, by many Christians in the land. Surely the facts which we see around us in regard to Popery, and the great apathy with which its advances are met, are sufficient to alarm, silence, and shut the mouths of such individuals as those to whom I allude." The same subject was brought before the Presbytery of Edinburgh, and again Dr. Candlish, Dr. Cunningham, and Dr. Begg spoke in the same strain. "We ought never to forget," Dr. Begg said, "that the proposed grant is avowedly to be given, not on the ground of principle, but merely for the purpose of satisfying what they believe to be an influential though noisy party in the country. It is, in fact, a mere concession to the turbulence of Ireland; and it occurs to me that if the Government saw a sufficient amount of popular agitation on the other side, they would be

disposed to give way after all." At a great public meeting held in Edinburgh a few days later to protest against the grant, Dr. Begg was the first speaker. His speech was long and very powerful; but of course the agitation was all in vain. Sir Robert Peel proposed the grant, and by the help of Lord John Russell, carried the first reading in the House of Commons by a majority of 102 (216–114). Notwithstanding the most energetic opposition, the bill passed through the other stages, the second reading being carried by a majority of 147 (323–176).

Dr. Begg was again the first speaker in a public meeting held in Edinburgh for the purpose of petitioning Parliament for the abolition of University tests. This was a question of special delicacy for him to handle. It may be freely admitted that three years earlier, while he was still a minister of the Established Church, he would not have spoken as he did now; and I think I am safe in saying that he would have spoken otherwise thirty or forty years later. The principal speakers were pronounced Voluntaries; and Dr. Begg began by disclaiming any desire for the total abolition of religious tests, and so far as I understand, intimating that he only desired the abolition of the test by which every professor on his admission was required to promise "to conform himself in practice to the worship, doctrine, and discipline of the Church as established by law." It was the suicidal policy of the Established Church, —in insisting not only on the expulsion of the theological professors, such as Chalmers and Welsh, for which there were at least plausible grounds, but also of lay professors, and especially Sir David Brewster,—that arrayed such men as Dr. Begg in opposition to them, and that ultimately led to the abolition of all religious tests, so far as the lay chairs are concerned. This matter also was brought before the Presbytery, and Dr. Begg again expressed his views regarding it.

At the meeting of the General Assembly in May, Dr. Begg

made a long and interesting statement on the subject of site-refusing. It consisted mainly of documentary evidence —letters written by the site-refusers themselves in answer to applications made to them. There is not a single word of vituperation or abuse from beginning to end; but a sustained and vigorous statement of a determination to persevere in agitation till a flagrant wrong should be redressed. The following portion of a paragraph may suffice as a specimen:—

"Now, having laid before you these details, the grand question now arises, What are we to do? It appears to me that two things must be done. I submit that we, as members of the Assembly, might perhaps have made a more direct application to those individuals who withhold sites, offering them money, or whatever is the value of the parcels of land thus needed.[1] But should we wait the result of this, we may lose the present session of Parliament; and I think it is our duty to go at once to the legislature, and urge upon them their duty to protect the landlords of Scotland from the fruit of their own folly. We can go to Parliament with a good grace, and urge that no man has a right to forbid his fellow-man to worship God according to his conscience. God, to whom the earth and its fulness belongs, never gave any man such a right. And, apart from this, we shall insist that no man in Great Britain is entitled to violate the law of toleration—that law which forms a fundamental part of our constitution. What, let me ask, would the result be if all the proprietors of land in this country were to unite and resolve that their religion should become the religion of the people; or more strange still, that the religion of the people should not be their religion, but something different from that which both they and the people prefer and believe in? The result would be that the country would be plunged into the horrors of a revolution. There is a species of chartism in the conduct of some of the landlords of Scotland. They are not acting in accordance with the law, but in defiance of

[1] It should be noted, however, that in no case was there any dispute about prices. The Duke of Buccleuch would certainly have refused to give a site at Canonbie though pounds had been offered for every shilling of the market value of the land.—T. S.

it; and I hurl back to them the injunction, 'Obey the law;' for it is you only who are violating the law."

Dr. Candlish, with reference to the speech, said, "He had endeavoured to frame a motion which would embody the suggestion laid down by Mr. Begg. I cannot," he observed, "but take this opportunity of saying that, many and invaluable as are the services which Mr. Begg has rendered to the Church, I conceive that none have exceeded that which he has now rendered, in bringing before us with so much fulness, and with so much temper, without any exaggeration, or any violence of language, strong facts without unnecessarily strong words."

In the same Assembly the subject of the Maynooth grant was introduced by Dr. Robert Buchanan in an admirable speech. His motion to petition the House of Lords (the bill having already passed the House of Commons), and to memorialise the Queen, was seconded by Dr. Begg, in a characteristic speech, and unanimously agreed to. Of course it was well understood that the case was hopeless; but none the less did the Assembly resolve to do their duty, however others might fail to do theirs.

Dr. Begg also in this Assembly moved the adoption of a report presented by Mr. Murray Dunlop, condemnatory of the new Poor-Law Bill for Scotland, which was then before Parliament, and which, in an evil hour, eventually became law. Two days before he had proposed the first resolution at a public meeting in the Waterloo Rooms, "of persons friendly to the formation of an association for protecting the interests of the poor, and for preventing or lessening, chiefly by moral influence, the ejectment of numbers of small tenants, especially in the Highlands, and for mitigating the distress consequent on such ejectments." Events long subsequent, and even now in course of occurrence, give special interest to his speech on this occasion. I therefore reproduce a considerable portion of the report of it:—

"In reference to the clearances in the Highlands, nothing could be more deeply painful than the facts which had from time to time been brought under their notice. He thought, if these matters were pressed to the uttermost it might give rise to the very painful question—a question which, for the advantage of all parties, ought to be allowed to sleep—as to how far public opinion would allow a man to trample on the rights and interests of the inhabitants of the country. He wished that question might not be raised, and that the landlords would take this hint, and not press further on the sensibilities, on the outraged feelings, of a great mass of the inhabitants of the three kingdoms, so as to be the cause of such a spectacle as driving the inhabitants of whole glens from the homes of their fathers. He did not think the cause of this was to be found in the insufficiency of the land to maintain the population of the Highlands, or that this painful measure was one of absolute necessity. He did not sympathise with such an idea as that. He believed that the land, properly managed, would not only maintain its present inhabitants, but a far greater number. The present measures were dictated, he also believed, by hatred of religious liberty. Formerly, when a clearance took place, the people were driven down to the sea-shore, and there allowed to remain in poverty; but the great drift now was to drive them out of the country, and to substitute for them cattle and sheep. So long as the people of the north of Scotland were as quiet as sheep, the landlords allowed them to remain; but now, for the first time in three centuries, the people had stood on the right of manhood, and asserted the right of thinking for themselves; and therefore it was proposed to extirpate them. They would not be as quiet as sheep, and sheep were preferred to them. In such circumstances, the great engine to be wielded was the engine of public opinion; and in this respect the *Times* newspaper had laid the people of the country under a deep debt of obligation. If this Association was formed, it would bring into play public opinion in a variety of ways. It would make the people of Scotland aware of their rights, and temperately claim and maintain them. From what he had seen of the character and disposition of the people of the Highlands, he could assert that, instead of being a clamorous people, urging their wrongs on the notice of the people of

the South, the one half of what they suffered was not yet told, and would perhaps never be told. . . . They might not be able to secure for the people of Glencalvie the restoration of their farms, but they might be able to prevent another Glencalvie affair from arising. He held this to be a matter of the greatest importance. They would send a voice across the hills; a voice which would be understood by every Highlander; a voice which would declare that the people of this country would never allow their fellow-countrymen to be treated as slaves, or their rights and privileges to be trodden under foot."

I can testify that it was to Dr. Begg a matter of the deepest regret that the action of a portion of the landowners of Scotland in the matters of site-refusing and Highland clearings, compelled him to occupy a position which, in the eye of the wilful partizan, and in that of the superficial observer, could be represented as identical with that of those who deny the right of property, and hold "equality" to be essential to "liberty and fraternity." All through his life his ideal was that of a contented, industrious, and religious peasantry living in happy concord with a genial and kindly aristocracy. But the more he recognised the privileges of property, the more strenuously did he feel himself compelled to insist on its responsibilities; and at this time, and at several other times, he conscientiously believed that, by some, the privileges were being abused, and the responsibilities disregarded. All his instincts were conservative; but no radical was ever more strenuous in maintaining that the neglect or contravention of duty must be met by a curtailment of privilege. Perhaps I should also explain further that Dr. Begg was not opposed to emigration in itself. On the contrary, he was its persistent advocate, believing that the colonies afford greater scope for the energies of a young man than the mother country. What he objected to was compulsory emigration, especially as he rightly or wrongly believed the motive of the compulsion to be the desire to

weaken the Free Church, by diminishing the number of its adherents in the country. It is difficult for us now to think it possible that this belief could be well founded; but it is impossible to assign limits to the evils which men may consider themselves warranted in perpetrating towards their opponents in times of special excitement.

It was strongly impressed on the Assembly of 1845 that the interests of the Free Church in the Highlands, through the refusal of sites, the sparseness of the population, and other causes, required fuller consideration than the Assembly was able to give it. It was therefore resolved that an adjourned meeting of the Assembly[1] should be held at Inverness in the month of August following. In preparation for this important meeting, it was considered advisable that some men should make short tours in the Highlands, and be able to report with some measure of authority on the condition of matters. These deputations were accordingly appointed to visit different districts. Of the proceedings of one of these deputations we have an interesting and amusing account by one of its members, Dr. Beith of Stirling,[2] now the father, or oldest minister, of the Free Church, indeed the oldest minister of any denomination in Scotland. The members of that deputation were Dr. M'Kellar, Dr. Candlish, and Dr. Beith. The members of the second were Dr. Macintosh Mackay, Dr. Begg, and Mr. Glass of Musselburgh.[3] On one occasion these two deputations casually met. Of this meeting Dr. Beith gives the following notice: "The morning

[1] The distinction ought to be noted between this and the Glasgow Assembly of 1843. That was a separate Assembly from the first Assembly in Edinburgh, new commissioners being chosen by the Presbyteries to represent them in it alone. This was simply an adjourned meeting of the Assembly of 1845. In no year save 1843 have there been two General Assemblies of the Free Church.—T. S.

[2] "Three Weeks with Dr. Candlish: A Highland Tour." By Alex. Beith, D.D., Stirling. Second Edition. Edinburgh, 1874.

[3] I have not been able to ascertain the names of the members of the third deputation.—T. S.

which followed our evening services at Lochgilphead saw Dr. Candlish and myself at Ardrishaig, two miles to the south of Lochgilphead, at the inlet to the Crinan Canal, awaiting the swift steamer from Glasgow. By her came Dr. Begg, member of another deputation—one of those which had been commissioned on similar work to ours, by the late Assembly, though in a different region. His colleagues were Dr. Mackay, late of Harris, and Mr. Glass, late of Musselburgh. Dr. Mackay joined him at Oban, Mr. Glass at a more advanced point in our tour. Dr. Begg was the companion of Dr. Candlish and myself for the day. The romantic pass from Lochfine, on the east shore of the vast peninsula of Kintyre, to Crinan on the west, never looked more beautiful than on this day, and never was looked on by more admiring eyes. My two associates were in their happiest moods—Dr. Candlish as joyous as a boy on vacation from school; Dr. Begg overflowing with humour and anecdote; of the latter it seemed as if there could be no end. As for myself, I was in the district in which I had been brought up. Every point in the landscape was familiar to me, and I was able to communicate to my fellow-travellers incidents of interest, bearing date for fifty years previous to the time of our journey, connected with this district."

The party arrived at Oban, and held a meeting in the evening. In connection with this visit was originated a movement for the erection of a Free Church. Every visitor to that most beautiful of all our Scottish places of resort is aware of the success with which the object was accomplished —in good part by the munificent aid of the late Marquis of Breadalbane. The following day was occupied with a trip to Iona and Staffa. On the return voyage, the party was broken up at Tobermory. "Dr. Begg, accompanied by the minister of Tobermory and an elder from Oban, took his route for Ardnamurchan proper and the adjoining districts."

At the Inverness Assembly, Dr. Begg gave a most interest-

ing account of his tour, and of the state of matters in the Highlands, speaking strongly, but "more in sorrow than in anger," of the sufferings inflicted on the people by site-refusing proprietors. I shall give some extracts from this speech, not apologising for their length, but rather regretting that I cannot transfer it in its entirety to my pages. It is happily not requisite now to reproduce the statements regarding the refusal of sites, and therefore I shall only extract such passages as refer to the country and the people:—

"I crossed from Tobermory to the district of Ardnamurchan, at a point called Laga. It was mid-day, but the people had nevertheless assembled to hear sermon. I there saw for the first time what I had often read of before—I saw a light burning on the hill as I advanced to the place, and, on inquiry, was told that it was a light to intimate to the people on the opposite side that there was to be sermon; and I saw the boats coming from the opposite shore with people to attend the service. Here was the fiery cross that used to bring out the Celts to war, now used to bring them out to hear the gospel of peace. Another man present began the services of the day; and I heard the solemn sound of the psalmody die away in the distant hills. I went to Strontian, where public worship was to take place, and it was requisite that means should be taken for summoning the people. As we sailed along the shore, I was much struck with the primitive way in which the intimation was made. A catechist was seated in the boat, and as she brushed along the shore, he cried out in Gaelic, '*Scarmon aig sea nairean*,' which means *service at six o'clock*.[1] This flew from hamlet to hamlet, and a large

[1] Dr. Begg had to bear a good deal of good-natured banter—which he took with equal goodnature—on the subject of this intimation. It was said that as *he* gave it the intimation did not, as he explained, mean *service at six o'clock*, but *a sermon of six hours* (long). In the Assembly of 1846, when giving an account of his visit to Canada, he jocularly alluded to the matter. "Sorry I was, indeed, that I had not the Gaelic tongue of some of my friends here, though it will astonish my friend Mr. Guthrie to learn that the single mouthful that I pronounced at Inverness—and whether right or wrong is still, I believe, to some extent a question of casuistry—still he will be astonished to learn, that it gained for me across the Atlantic such a character for proficiency in Gaelic, that when in Canada I received a letter proposing that I

audience, when worship commenced, was assembled on the hill. . . . I could not understand the Gaelic sermon; but one thing I could not fail to observe, that a more effective sermon could scarcely have been preached. Not only did the people hang on the lips of the speaker, but they exhibited the deepest emotion. The audience was dissolved in tears, and deep sobs were heard throughout. . . . I shortly spoke to the people of the district; and a venerable patriarch afterwards came forward, and made an address to me in his native tongue. That address was interpreted, and the meaning of it was, that he blessed God that he had lived to see the day when the Church of Scotland was taking so deep an interest in her scattered children, and was sending men to witness the trials to which they were subjected; with a prayer that all blessings might descend upon the Church, and upon us. . . .

"We came to Lochcarron, on the Applecross estate; and, to give you an idea of the intense interest that prevails among the Highlanders as to the preaching of the Gospel, I may state that we had not gone many miles on the road to this place before we saw individuals who were on the highway accosting in a most earnest manner the person who carried our luggage. We afterwards learned that they were inquiring if we were Free Church ministers, and if we were to preach. Our arrival was spread far and wide over the neighbourhood, with an intimation that we were to preach, and though it was seven o'clock when we arrived, by eight o'clock about 800 people were assembled to hear us, and they remained till eleven o'clock to hear the Word of God preached to them. . . .

"We at length came down upon Applecross, with the Atlantic lying before it. It was a cold evening, but we found a large number of people assembled, and we were shocked to see them gathered together in a place almost inaccessible on the seashore. We had to sit on stones, literally amid the tangle of the seashore;[1] and there were to be seen

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should preach two sermons in English during the day; and as the writer understood that I 'had the Gaelic,' he invited me also to .preach in that tongue in the evening."—T. S.

[1] It is difficult to believe, but yet it is true, that a Christian congregation, in a district where there were thousands of acres of rough pasture land, could find no place to assemble for worship but between low and high water mark. —T. S.

amiable matrons, and old men and maidens, sitting to hear the Gospel preached, while the waves of the Atlantic dashed at their feet. . . . When I left Applecross to reach another district, accompanied by a brother minister, we had to pass over a mountain where there was no road. It was a wild hill, requiring considerable effort to reach the top. I looked from the top of that hill, and when I saw the house of Applecross sending up its smoke among the trees, I thought of the singular change that had taken place in the old feudal system. I could see a beauty in that old system when it was a patriarchal system, in which the people looked up to their landlord as their friend and protector; but when, instead of this, we see mutual dislike, and on the part of the landlord persecution and oppression, then, I say, not only is this entire system in danger, but these men are just doing what the worst enemy of the institutions of the country would wish them to do. If I had been desirous to lay the axe to the root of the institutions of this country, I would have entreated these men just to act as Applecross has done. Why, they are taking the very steps that are calculated to loosen the bonds of society. . . . Do I rejoice at this? No; I regret it. But I throw the entire blame on those men who, by their cruel oppressions, are bringing about results so disastrous. . . .

"I was anxious to find out the real ground on which the Secession in the Highlands rested. I think I may explain shortly to our south country friends, that it was entirely and exclusively, in general, on Christian and Scriptural grounds that the Highlanders left the Established Church. I found in every instance in which I have made inquiry that it was because in previous times, and at the present day, they had been blessed with the preaching of the Word of God, that the Highlanders had left the Establishment. One great good of our coming to Inverness has been to mingle not only our sympathies with our northern friends—which I anticipated as the result of the Assembly's coming—but to make known to us the eminent men who laboured here, of whom we had never heard before. For example, at Lochcarron, I found that an eminent servant of God had long been there, of whom it may be said, 'This man has laboured, and you are entering into his labours.' I heard all the people speaking of Mr. Lachlan Mackenzie, and when I asked who he was, I was told that he was one of the most

eminent ministers that was ever in Scotland. I was shown his pulpit, which was kept as a sort of relic, and they said that many, many a great word had been spoken from that pulpit. I went to the churchyard, and wrote down the inscription on his grave-stone, and I am persuaded that I am addressing some of those who will remember the man himself. The inscription struck me as peculiarly beautiful; I will read it to you. 'Here are deposited the mortal remains of the Rev. Lachlan M'Kenzie, late minister of Lochcarron, who died on the 20th of April 1813, in the 37th year of his ministry; a man whose simplicity of manners presented a picture of apostolic times; whose benevolence of mind still spurned the vain objects of time and sense, whose broad imagination shed a bright lustre on every subject which he handled, and whose holy unction in all his ministrations endeared him to the people of God, and embalmed his memory in their hearts; his praise is in the Churches! His parish mourns!' Now, I say that there were a number of men of a kindred spirit scattered over the north of Scotland, and they are even there still. You had the Calders and the Robertsons; there was that great and holy man Kennedy of Redcastle, individuals lately gone; and you have your own Dr. Macdonald still living to preside over this Assembly. These men had sown broadcast the living bread among the people of the north of Scotland; and when they saw these men not only leave the walls of the Establishment, but when they saw them carrying, as it were, the Word of God away with them, these Highlanders, as one man, followed their footsteps. . . .

"Let us not fear what man can do. We know that man cannot go farther than God permits him, and we see that even the opposition which men have been permitted to raise has been the means of forcing our cause on the notice of individuals in the three kingdoms, and in distant lands. If we had been always sailing on smooth waters, if everything had gone on well with us, could we have had it to tell of our cause being so triumphant as we see it to-day? Let us therefore thank God and take courage."

As to the character of the discussion of which this speech of Dr. Begg was, perhaps, the most important part, Dr. Beith, a most competent judge, makes the following state-

ment: "The Monday evening services were very brilliant. Dr. Buchanan of Glasgow, Mr. Begg, and Dr. Candlish made three of the best continuous speeches I ever heard spoken in any Assembly." The Inverness Assembly may be regarded as an epoch in Dr. Begg's life. It was in connexion with it that he was first brought into intimate relations with the Highlands and the Highlanders. In the later years of his life it was regarded by many as an unaccountable anomaly that he—a Sassenach, utterly ignorant of the language and the traditions of the people—should be one of the most trusted counsellors of a people who are generally regarded as distinguished by no characteristic more than their clannishness. Yet so it was. No chief of other days, no godly Gaelic minister of later times, had a more influential place in the great Highland heart than that which was occupied by this Lowlander; nor ever did feudal chief or godly pastor return with more devotedness the confidence or affection of clan or flock. This was no doubt due in part to the intimate friendship which was ere long formed between him and such representative leaders of the great Highland host as the late Drs. Macintosh Mackay, Kennedy of Dingwall, and the happily surviving Drs. George Mackay of Inverness[1] and Gustavus Aird of Creich, and other ministers and laymen of distinction and influence. But the friendship itself seems to have originated in the Inverness Assembly, and in that three weeks' tour which was undertaken in preparation for it.[2]

It may seem an anti-climactic descent to pass from a notice of what exercised an important influence on the whole of Dr. Begg's subsequent life and action, to an indication in this speech of a feature which afterwards became characteristic in his *manner* of speaking. Previously to this I

[1] Dr. Mackay died, full of years and honours, since this was written.—T. S.

[2] Dr. Begg contributed to the *Free Church Magazine* an interesting account of this visit to the Highlands. It is published in the Nos. of the Magazine for September, October, and November 1845.—T. S.

have not noticed in his speeches the introduction of those illustrative anecdotes which afterwards made his speeches so telling. The stories were not much in themselves, and he had not a great variety of them. But he did not object—and his hearers did not object—to a repetition of them. They were always short—generally little more than a sentence. They were almost all descriptive of the shrewd "pawkiness" of the preceding generation, or of those of that generation who lived down to his own time; and he told them so happily and with so manifest relish that they never failed to please the audience, even when the audience was not a very friendly one. I find two examples in the Inverness speech. The Duke of Buccleuch had been reported as resting his vindication as a site-refuser on the statement that in the course of communion services at Canonbie he had been spoken of as a godless tyrant. This was, of course, denied. Then His Grace explained that he had been misunderstood, and that he had not made the statement as reported. Dr Begg treated the matter thus: "I should like to know where his argument is now for refusing sites to his tenantry. It seems to me that the only argument which was supposed to have been used by His Grace never having been used, His Grace has no argument at all on which now to stand. It reminds me much of what once took place in the old Assembly of the Established Church. A vigorous old minister from the West made a speech at the bar, and an advocate, who shall be nameless, was his opponent. The advocate made a statement, partly true, but partly incorrect, and on the incorrect part of the statement he founded an argument which raised a loud laugh at the expense of the venerable minister. The latter rose and disclaimed the statement, on which the advocate replied, 'Very well, then, of course, it is not true.' 'Aye! but (rejoined the minister) it spoils your joke.'" The other story is thus introduced. Lord Cawdor, another site-refuser, had expressed indignation that any one should inter-

fere betwixt him and his tenantry. "This reminds me of what is told of a man who came from a slave-holding district in America to this country, and brought one of his slaves with him. He began to treat his slave here as he did in the country from which he came, when the law interposed for his protection. 'Call you this,' he said, 'a free country, where a man cannot punish his own negro?'"[1] Many men would have made far less account of far better stories.

Our pages have contained few references to the private or family life of Dr. Begg. With the exception of the throat affection from which he suffered in 1841 (see vol. i. p. 407), that might hitherto have been comprehended under the benediction which one pronounced on a nation, "Blessed are the people whose annals are a blank." But it were not good for any Christian man that it should be so with him always. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth;" and to Dr. Begg it was a sore, yet, I doubt not, a salutary chastening, when suddenly "the desire of his eyes was cut down with a stroke." Within a month after the meeting of the Inverness Assembly, and just a fortnight after its close, the Edinburgh newspapers contain the following notice:—

"At 15 Minto Street, Newington, on the 13th instant, Margaret Campbell, wife of the Rev. James Begg."

Mrs. Begg's death was very sudden. A few months before she had given birth to a still-born child, and had not, I believe, recovered her wonted strength, but her last illness was only of a few hours' duration. The following notice, from Hugh Miller's pen, appears in the *Witness* of September 20:—

"Our obituary this week records an event of a painful nature. The wife of the Rev. James Begg—a name endeared to thousands of his countrymen—has been taken, on a few hours' warning, from the bosom of her family and the

[1] "Wallop his own nigger" is the more approved reading.—T. S.

society of her friends. 'Her sun has gone down while it was yet day.' It is not our purpose to portray the character of the deceased, though it would exhibit much that is worthy of admiration and imitation. Her manners were of that quiet, unassuming, courteous, and yet dignified kind which never fail to make a powerful impression on all who come within the circle of their influence. Sincere piety presided over the graces which encircled her life, and amidst the ardour of her affection for fellow-creatures it was always evident that she loved her Saviour. She died in peace, 'looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.' The decease of Mrs. Begg has excited a wide, deep, and unmingled feeling of sorrow. Human sympathy, indeed, can do little to assuage the grief of the bereaved; but to them the consolations of religion are abundant."

Those who knew Dr. Begg but slightly, and who looked on him as he showed in the atmosphere of the public meeting or the Church court, will fail to realise the depth of his feeling under this sore trial. Those who were intimate with him knew otherwise. It might be that his strength made him less sensitive than weaker men to small sufferings, but that same strength made him suffer the more when great trials were laid on him. The largest eyes, in great sorrows, shed the largest tears. The time of his sorrow was to him a time of blessing; and as his beloved flock shared with him his sorrow, he would have them partakers of his blessing. With this view he presented each of them with a copy of a sermon which he had sent to a periodical for publication, to which he now prefixed, as a preface, a pastoral address to his congregation.[1] As this preface was never published, in the ordinary sense of the word, and as probably few copies are still in existence, I venture to reproduce a portion of it,

[1] "Are you Prepared to Die? An Address and Sermon to his dear Flock—September 1845. By the Rev. James Begg, Newington, Edinburgh, 1845."

both as an autobiographical fragment, and as indicative of the earnestness with which its author watched over the souls of his flock, "as one that must give account":—

"MY DEAR PEOPLE, for whose salvation I earnestly long and pray, the following Sermon was sent to the *Christian Treasury* for publication,[1] when I little dreamt of what was about to take place—before it pleased God, in His adorable sovereignty, to remove so suddenly from this vale of tears one dear to me as my own soul, the sweet companion of all my struggles, the blessed mother of my children. The Lord's hand has been very heavy upon me, and I have been bowed down to the earth. But what shall I say? A Father's hand has done it; and done it, I trust, in love.

"Dumb was I, opening not my mouth,
Because this work was Thine.'

"It has been, indeed, a very solemn lesson to me. Oh that it may be a sanctified lesson. 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.' In calmly looking back to this sore bereavement, I desire to record my deep sense of the faithfulness and love of our Heavenly Father in mingling so much comfort with a trial otherwise overwhelming,—unspeakable comfort in regard to the beloved dead; great comfort in the kind sympathy and prayers of so many of you and others of God's dear people; comfort especially in access to Him who is a merciful as well as a faithful high priest, and who can be touched with a feeling of all our infirmities. I can humbly set to my seal that God is true, who saith, 'As thy day is, so shall thy strength be:' and oh for grace to be enabled to say, 'Not my will, but Thine, be done.' God doth all things well, and what we know not now we shall know hereafter. Oh for grace to 'know the rod, and Him who hath appointed it,' and to 'work while it is day, before the night cometh when no man can work.' . . .

"ARE YOU PREPARED TO DIE? Were God as suddenly to summon you to His judgment-seat, how would you appear? Oh, my dear friends, ponder on this. The answer to this question depends entirely on another: Have you 'fled for

[1] The Sermon was published in the *Christian Treasury*, then a weekly publication, of 26th February.—T. S.

refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you in the Gospel ?' All out of Christ are condemned; but there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Observe the expression—'*in* Christ Jesus,' that is, united to Him by faith,—*in* Him, as their peace, their surety, their intercessor; —*in* Him, as in the ark of eternal safety. Out of Christ 'God is a consuming fire.' This is the fearful state of all careless, prayerless sinners; they are on the brink of destruction, and are ready continually to be driven away in their wickedness. Oh, my hearers, ought not this to be a time of great heart-searching to you all; for I fear that many of you are still far from God, and far from righteousness. God has not yet cut you off. There is room yet for you in the heart of God, in the love of Jesus and of His angels and people, in that house in which there are many mansions. And the precious blessings of the Gospel are still freely offered to all. I protest before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and kingdom, that I again, in circumstances of peculiar solemnity, urge upon your acceptance this free salvation, and beseech you, even with tears, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God; and if ye still reject the precious offer, the wrath of God shall not only abide on you for ever, but your blood shall be entirely on your own souls.

"I dare not trust myself to speak in public of what has taken place; but the following sermon, of which I desire each of you to accept a copy, with my most heartfelt prayers to God for your everlasting salvation, contains a statement, however imperfect, of some of the most vital truths of the Word of God, and truths also wonderfully applicable to the recent solemn events; for the principles and truths of this sermon were strikingly illustrated in the life and death of her who is now with Jesus. The grand matter, beloved brethren, is our being born again, washed in the blood of sprinkling, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, having passed from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Until this great, this blessed change is accomplished in us, nothing is done, all is mere dead formality and hypocritical pretence. . . . But what abundant encouragement, when we look up to the great "cloud of witnesses," by nature as guilty and as weak as

we, but by grace triumphant now over every difficulty and every foe, and remember that Jesus, in whose blood they washed, in whose strength they triumphed, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Amidst all temptations, and in the discharge of all duties, let the question ever recur: 'What would we think of this if we were about to die?' and let us commit our souls *in well-doing* to Jesus, as unto a faithful Creator, a merciful Redeemer, who knows our frame, who remembers that we are dust, who will make 'His grace sufficient for us, and perfect His strength in our weakness.' No one can tell to whom the messenger of death shall next come. It will soon come to all. Pastor and people shall soon stand at the judgment-seat. Oh to be prepared to go out and meet the Bridegroom!—to be enabled, through abounding grace, to live and die in the humble but cheering confidence that 'when this earthly house of our tabernacle is dissolved, we shall have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!' A few short years, and all the family of God shall be collected, and death shall be swallowed up in an everlasting victory. 'Be thou faithful unto death; I will give thee a crown of life.' 'What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.' 'Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.'

"Your unworthy but affectionate Pastor,

"JAMES BEGG."

This will give a fair idea—though of course a very imperfect one—of Dr. Begg's faithfulness and tenderness in dealing with his people.

Funeral Sermons were preached in Newington Church by Dr. Candlish and Dr. Cunningham. They are thus noticed in the *Witness* of September 24:—

"THE LATE MRS. BEGG.—On Sabbath last, services were held in Newington Church, in connection with the sudden and lamented death of Mrs. Begg. Dr. Candlish preached in the morning from John x. 9, 'I am the good shepherd,' and in a discourse of great eloquence and power unfolded the nature and blessedness of the relation which the statement implies, and the peace and comfort which in all

circumstances it is fitted to convey to the believer. Dr Cunningham preached in the afternoon from John ix. 4, 'I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh in which no man can work.' At the conclusion of his discourse, Dr. Cunningham adverted to the striking and solemn circumstances in which he had been called to address them. After speaking of the singularly amiable character of the deceased, of the heaviness of the stroke which, in her removal, had fallen on their pastor, he urged on the congregation that 'they should learn the lesson which the event was so well fitted to teach them. She had died rejoicing in the faith. Though a little startled when first told that her end was near—as who would not have been in similar circumstances?—she immediately resigned herself into the Lord's hands, was enabled to place an unwavering and joyful confidence on her Saviour, and died in the full hope of the glory that excelleth. Their bereaved pastor, though sorely cast down, was yet bearing his affliction —as he expected he would—with the resignation and composure of a Christian man. It became them to sympathise deeply with him, and to be much in prayer for him, that his heart might be comforted, and his hands strengthened, for the work upon which he must again enter. Let them also improve the event to the good of their own souls. They did not know how suddenly they too might be called away. Let them see to it that they were ready for the coming of the Son of Man; for He would come to them all some day,—it might be in an hour when they expected Him not.' The congregation—of the intensity of whose attachment to their pastor and his departed wife we need not speak—were deeply affected during the services. Indeed, seldom has a similar event occurred, which has produced on a neighbourhood so deep and solemnising an impression."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE — VISIT TO CANADA — KNOX MONUMENT — QUOAD SACRA CHURCHES — SECOND MARRIAGE.

AFTER so severe a bereavement, Dr. Begg might well have claimed the privilege of withdrawing for a season from the conduct of public business. And no doubt he meant to do so. But as generally happens in such cases, engagements pressed upon him which he found it impossible to decline. So early as the 1st of October he took part in an important Conference which was held at Liverpool with the view of forming the EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE. In reporting to the Presbytery of Edinburgh the proceedings of this Conference, he said: "I may state that so deeply was I convinced of the great importance of that meeting, as bearing on the spiritual interests of the Church of Christ, that I went to Liverpool at a time when certainly I would have gone nowhere else." It is of importance to notice the position which he took up with reference to this Alliance, because a correct apprehension of it will enable us to understand his action at subsequent periods with respect to proposals of incorporative union between the Free Church and other Churches. That position is unmistakably indicated by a few sentences of his speech in the Presbytery:—

"The circumstances to which Dr. Candlish has already referred, no doubt contributed most materially to produce this perfect harmony, particularly the clear and unequivocal announcement that nothing like compromise was expected from any party. Indeed, no Christian man dares compromise what he holds to be the truth of Christ, even though

it may seem to be a small truth; but there was a great difficulty in meeting with men as the representatives of denominations, if these denominations were such as we had been publicly testifying against;[1] and one great obstacle I felt was removed out of the way when the resolution was adopted that hereafter we should meet as individuals, and take every man on his own footing, and only on the ground of his own Christian character."

On the 1st of December, Dr. Begg spoke to the same effect in a public meeting in Edinburgh on the subject of Christian Union; and in the Assembly of 1846, when the constitution of the Evangelical Alliance was formally impugned in a motion by Professor Gibson, Dr. Begg seconded a motion by Dr. Candlish in its defence, and supported it in a long and eloquent speech.

This ground is perfectly intelligible, and, I venture to think, perfectly tenable. That Christian men, differing from each other in their views of some points of Christian doctrine, may co-operate with one another in the promotion of Christian or philanthropic objects, is what, I presume, no one will dispute. That Christian churches, differing on matters even of material importance, may recognise one another's Christian constitution, and may heartily co-operate with each other, seems to me to be equally manifest. But the question is a totally different one which has to do with the union of two churches, which either hold opposite views on some material point or points, or one of which embodies these points in its Confession, and the other regards them as "open questions." In order to a union there must of necessity be a compromise of confessional testimony, in the former case on both sides, in the latter on one side. Of course, since no one ever held that a Church's Confession can contain, or ought to contain, *all* truth, it is always a legitimate question whether the points of difference are of so little moment that the relegation of them to the category of open questions would be

[1] I suppose this referred primarily to the Established Church of Scotland. But the principle is applicable to other churches as well.—T. S.

either a good thing in itself, or a less evil than the continuance of separation; and this question cannot be decided on general principles, but must be considered with reference to actual cases as they occur. In the sequel we shall have to consider the question with reference to one and another case of actual occurrence. For the present we have to do neither with the union of churches, nor with the co-operation of churches with churches, but only with the co-operation of individuals with individuals. On the part of some Free Churchmen—notably on the part of Dr. Begg's specially loved and specially respected friend, the late Professor Gibson of Glasgow—there were grave doubts as to the possibility of effecting, save by compromise, even such co-operation as was contemplated by the Evangelical Alliance. But Dr. Begg seems to have held his ground; while he was probably more watchful than some others against the insidious approach of virtual compromise. In point of fact the *Alliance*, although it might not altogether fulfil the expectations of its founders, has on several occasions, with the help of God, accomplished much good, interposing with good effect on behalf of the persecuted and oppressed, while disclaiming any power but that of moral suasion, and the influence of Christianised public opinion.

The last months of 1845 and the first of 1846 constitute an "epoch-forming" period in Dr. Begg's life. They were occupied in a visit to Canada and the United States of America, which gave a new current to his thoughts and feelings on many ecclesiastical and social themes, and furnished him with abundant illustrations to which he never ceased to recur in subsequent years. Several deputations had been sent by the Free Church to Canada and the United States. The most important of them was the mission of Dr. Cunningham and Dr. Robert Burns, out of which arose the "Send-back-the-money" controversy, the interest of which has happily passed away with the abolition of slavery in

America. To that controversy I have no occasion to refer, as Dr. Begg took no prominent part in it. Only he did on some occasions express his accord with Dr. Cunningham and others in the view that, utterly hating and strongly condemning slavery, we yet were not entitled to break off all communion with churches who had slaveholders among their members, and to treat them, not as churches of Christ, but as synagogues of Satan. The main object of Dr. Cunningham's deputation seems to have been to expound the principles of the Free Church to the Presbyterians and other Christians of America, so as to excite their sympathy, and to lead them to contribute to the various funds of the Free Church in her initial operations. In this respect the deputies were eminently successful. In Canada they had a different, or rather an additional, task assigned them. The Canadian Presbyterian Church stood in a definite relation to the Church of Scotland. A large proportion of its ministers had been ordained by the Church of Scotland, and had been sent out by the Colonial Committee of that Church. At the Disruption of the Scottish Church, there was, therefore, almost as a matter of course, a disruption also of the Colonial Church. Of the Colonial ministers who adhered to the Establishment, a considerable proportion, aware that there were some 500 vacancies in the Home Church, deemed it their duty to come to the aid of their venerable Mother, and returned to this country, professing their willingness to accept some of these vacant charges! Thus in Canada there was a considerable number of congregations who, with their ministers, adhered to the Free Church, and a considerable number more who had been deserted by their ministers, several of the more prominent of whom had been strenuous Free Churchmen down to the date of the Disruption. These latter congregations did not feel any very strong attachment to the ministers who had so acted towards them, or to the Church to which their ministers had clung. But had it

been otherwise, these congregations saw that the Established Church had it not in her power to send ministers to them. There was thus a loud call on the Free Church to exert herself on behalf of the Colonists, and it was in connection with this call that deputations were sent to Canada. Dr. Burns of Paisley, who had been convener of the Colonial Committee of the Established Church before the Disruption, was with Dr. Cunningham on the first deputation, and shortly afterwards he returned to Canada, and spent there the remainder of his life (which happily was prolonged to extreme old age) in noble work for the good of his adopted country and its Presbyterian Church. The first of the Free Church deputations to the American continent appears to have had mainly in view the United States and the work which, I have said, was to be done there, while the work in Canada, however important, seems to have been regarded as secondary. But the former was to be done once, and it was done. We got noble help from our American brethren in bearing the heavy charges connected with the beginning of our work; it would have been altogether wrong to depend on them for help in the conducting of our operations, unless unexpected emergencies should occur. Thus it happened that while the first deputation was appointed by the General Assembly, and was charged primarily with the work to be done in the States, and secondarily with that to be done in Canada, the subsequent deputations were nominated by the Colonial Committee, and were charged primarily with the work in Canada, and secondarily with what might still remain to be done in the United States. Such was the mission on which Dr. Begg was sent.

The first public announcement that I find of this appointment, is in the proceedings of the Edinburgh Presbytery on the 18th of November 1845, as follows:—

"Mr. Begg said—I have a matter to bring before the Presbytery. I have been requested by the Colonial Com-

mittee to go out to Canada for a short time to preach the Gospel in that country; and I have to request the permission of the Presbytery to do so; and not only so, but I have very earnestly to request that the Presbytery, if they grant me permission, will have particular regard to my congregation that I leave behind, and to the regular supplying them with ordinances; and also that I may go with the prayers of the brethren that my labours in that country may be crowned with success. That is the request I have now to make to the Presbytery. I may mention that the Colonial Committee, at a very early period, requested me to go to that country. There were difficulties in the way which are now removed, and I am now most willing to go to do what little I can for the purpose of supplying the destitution there, if the Presbytery grant me permission.

"Dr. Gordon said, that if the necessities of the country were such as he really believed they were, he supposed they could hardly refuse to allow their brother to go, although it would be a sacrifice on the part of the Presbytery and of Mr. Begg's flock. He was very sure the prayers of the brethren would go with him. They would certainly take care that his flock suffered as little as possible from his absence.

"Dr. Clason said they were aware of the personal sacrifices Mr. Begg would have to make, and he was sure they would all be glad to see that he was willing to forego all personal considerations in a matter in which the welfare of the Church was deeply involved. He was also sure that he would have the prayers of the Church, and he would humbly suggest that the Moderator, in a few words, should embody their feelings on the occasion.

"The suggestion was unanimously agreed to, and the Moderator, Mr. Bruce, offered up an impressive prayer."

The permission of the Presbytery was technically sufficient to justify Dr. Begg's temporary absence from his congregation. But in a matter in which they were so deeply interested, it was obviously fitting that the consent of the office-bearers and members of Newington should be expressed. Accordingly we find the following notice in the *Witness* of 3d December:—

"NEWINGTON FREE CHURCH.—At a meeting of the elders

and deacons of this congregation on Thursday evening last, the following resolution in reference to the mission of their esteemed pastor, Mr. Begg, to Canada, was proposed by Mr. Noble, seconded by Mr. Forest, and unanimously adopted:—'The elders and deacons of this congregation desire to register their grateful acknowledgments to Almighty God for the blessings bestowed upon them by the able and faithful ministry of their beloved pastor, Mr. Begg. They would also express their unfeigned regret for the temporary separation which, by the good providence of God, is about to take place. But considering the spiritual destitution of their countrymen in North America, and the gifts and graces of their minister, they are most willing that he should be absent from them for a time, to carry the glad tidings of salvation to those who are perishing for lack of knowledge. They therefore commend him to the Keeper of Israel, who slumbers not nor sleeps, praying earnestly that he may be preserved safe amid the dangers of sea and land, that his labours may be abundantly blessed, that he may be restored to his attached flock, doubly endeared to them after his temporary absence, and be long spared to go in and out among them, and be much honoured in winning souls to the Saviour.'

"Mr. Begg made a very appropriate and affectionate response, and the meeting, after arranging some congregational business, and engaging in praise and prayer, dismissed. The reverend gentleman met with the congregation on Monday evening for the last time previous to his departure. The meeting was numerously attended, and the utmost affection was evinced between pastor and flock. Mr. Begg, we understand, left town yesterday morning, and will sail from Liverpool to-morrow."

Dr. Begg gave a full account of his Canadian trip in the General Assembly, and afterwards in a series of articles in the *Free Church Magazine*.[1] In these days, when all of us go to America and all Americans come here, the account of a visit made less than forty years ago possesses somewhat of the antiquarian interest that makes the narratives of the old

[1] "A few more Notes of a Visit to Canada," by the Rev. James Begg, *Free Church Magazine*, 1846, pp. 169, 202, 248, 374; and 1847, pp. 325, 341, 378.

voyagers and travellers—the Marco Polos and the Sir John Mandevilles—so attractive. There could not be a better illustration of this than the opening paragraph of the first of the *Magazine* articles, which consists of an apology for steam-navigation, showing the superiority of the steamer to the sailing vessel in respect of speed, safety, and other particulars. It is remarkably well argued; but the amusing thing to us in these days is that it needed to be argued. So it is always with improvements, and indeed with changes and innovations which are not improvements. The most familiar objects of to-day were the speculations and projections of yesterday. The luxuries of the past are the necessities of the present. I was not quite a child when I first saw a lucifer match. A relative had brought a few from the Continent, and I well remember the wonder and admiration caused by their ignition, which was effected by dipping their points in some liquid or other; and now flint, steel, and tinder-box are to be found nowhere but in the museums of such collectors of "nick-nackets" as Captain Grose! Such is substantially the history of steam-travelling by sea and land, of electric telegraphy and electric lighting, of penny postage, and penny newspapers. First non-existent and unthought of, then thought of by one or a few and ridiculed by the many, then after a longer or a shorter time become so common and so indispensable that we can hardly realise that generations passed their lives in tolerable comfort without them. The fact that this applies to evil inventions, not less than unto good, gives double emphasis to the principle *Obsta principiis*, or according to Dr. Begg's favourite and oft-repeated rendering of it: Take care of the thin end of the wedge.

The mission on which Dr. Begg was sent to Canada was to preach the Gospel to those who were destitute of religious ordinances, to expound the principles of the Free Church, and to suggest means whereby the adherents of the Free Church might be organised into congregations, and might

have the ordinances of religion brought within their reach. With a zeal of which only an ardent soul was capable, and amid the obstacles and difficulties of a Canadian winter, which a less powerful physical frame could not have encountered, he carried out the first two of these objects. As to the third his practical mind led him, both in Canada and after his return, strenuously to advocate the training of an indigenous ministry, again and again referring to the example of Dr. Duff in Calcutta, and pointing out that the Continental Committee, by sending out a minister to a Canadian congregation, did a comparatively small work which needed to be repeated after a short interval; whereas, by aiding such institutions as the Toronto College, and encouraging the extension of secondary education, they would sow the seed of a permanent and self-propagating benefit. He also strove to inculcate upon the colonists the duty and the privilege of self-help, and was not sparing in his denunciations of the spirit of dependence which was too prevalent among them.

Important as was the visit to Canada, both in its direct effects on those visited, and in its reflex influence on the visitor, I make no quotation from the speeches or articles in which he gave account of it, because a host of later travellers have seen far more of the country, and have formed a far more accurate estimate of the condition of the colonists and the resources of the colony, than it was possible for him to do in the course of a three months' visit during the depth of its severe winter. But I shall collect from the speeches and articles a few of the characteristic anecdotes by which they are enlivened.

At Halifax he found an old friend, Mr. Robb, the only minister adhering to the Free Church in Nova Scotia, the others having been expected to join it, but "for reasons known to themselves," having not done so. The Established Church had sent a deputation to Canada, and they had been in Halifax shortly before Dr. Begg's visit. Mr. Robb met a

member of that deputation in the street, and thus accosted him, "How do you do, Dr. ——?" Dr. —— intimated that he was well, but did not know by whom he was addressed. "Do you not remember me?" said Mr. Robb. "The last time we met you were speaking in favour of spiritual independence and non-intrusion at St. Andrews." The Doctor coloured, and changed the subject.

The following is an interesting bit of natural theology:—

"If one is properly dressed, there would be little danger even in going to the North Pole; and that simply because, owing to the manifest design of God, the parts which require to be exposed will not freeze. A man's eyes and lungs must be exposed, for a man must see and breathe, . . . and these are just the parts that are not injured by frost. That is a very singular thing, and illustrates the truth that we are 'fearfully and wonderfully made.' One would think that if there was a part of the face more tender than another it was the eye; if there was anything more apt to freeze than another, it was the liquid of the eye, and that the same frost that would congeal mercury, and turn the naked hand very speedily into a piece of ice, would soon freeze the eye. . . . Now here is the proof of infinite wisdom, that the eye is altogether unaffected even by the extremest cold. Again, the coating of the lungs is more tender than the coating of the head or of the ears. . . . And the singular fact, illustrative of 'the manifold wisdom of God,' is, that the most piercing cold, which makes you involuntarily put up your hand to discover if your nose and ears are there, only exhilarates your lungs."

In connection with the support of the ministry by the colonists, the following anecdote is introduced:—

"At the same time it must be confessed that there are strong temptations to a worldly spirit on the other side of the Atlantic. Many of the colonists have been very poor, and have come through extraordinary hardships, which makes them cleave with extraordinary tenacity to their newly acquired wealth. The tales of these sufferings are like novels. I shall never forget the story which a most worthy man told me of his sufferings and shipwreck. The vessel in which he had sailed from Scotland, having been wrecked off

the coast of Nova Scotia, was deserted by its captain. The passengers were advised to try to escape by the boats. The boat was lowered amidst a dark and stormy sea, and they proceeded to attempt getting the passengers on board of it. Of course the females must be first put on board, and this man's wife was the first fixed upon. She was fastened to a rope and lowered over the ship's side. But lo! the fearful discovery was made that the rope was not long enough to reach the boat. There was not a moment to be lost, and one can imagine how a man's blood must have curdled when it was resolved to let his wife go, uncertain whether she was to alight in the boat or to go to the bottom of the sea. In the kind providence of God she did alight in the boat. By various plans the others were got down. No sooner had they left the ship at a little distance than she went to the bottom. The perishing emigrants were landed on a bleak shore; and the man who told us this adventure is now in very comfortable circumstances, and his wife, who passed through this strange ordeal, is alive and well."

From New Brunswick to Canada proper, Dr. Begg proceeded by way of the United States. Beyond a short account of a Sabbath in Boston, he gives us no details of his experience in the States, reserving this for a subsequent article, which, so far as I can find, he never wrote. In connection with this visit to Boston, we have the following sketch of Channing and Unitarianism:—

"I was anxious to hear something of Channing in his own city. There is in his writings a glow of earnestness which almost approaches to spiritual life; and this, coupled with his beautiful style and vigorous thinking, has misled many, and diffused widely the poison of his principles. I found, however, as I had anticipated, that, as a man, he was precisely like the rest, except perhaps more prominently zealous in behalf of those merely temporal objects which exclusively engross the anxieties of men whose eyes have never been opened to see the glories of Christ and the wonders of eternity. It is rumoured, however, and I earnestly hope, correctly, that his views became sounder immediately before his death. At the

same time it may be noticed generally, that Unitarianism in Boston, so far as I could see, is not so much a controversial thing as a mere negation of religion. Its aspects are not unlike those of the worst forms of Moderatism in Scotland. It keeps up the sound of old associations; it boasts of the fathers; it is outwardly decent and kind; whilst in the absence of such a restraint as existed in Scotland in the Confession of Faith and law of the land, it has spoken out, in the way of heresy, all that was in its heart. Some Moderate ministers that could be named, of past and present times, would have manifested all the heresy, if not the talent of Channing, had they lived in Boston. The depressing effect of this system is seen in the whole city. There is a consequent coldness in most of the churches. The people sit listless and vacant; scarcely any of them sing; few of them seem to open their Bibles when the text is given out, and many of them do not take the trouble to stand or kneel at prayer. . . . The hired music of the churches is the only thing which seems to excite much attention. It is said that about 30,000 dollars a year is paid to hired singers in Boston, and that a common question on leaving the church is not, 'What did you think of the sermon?' but 'What did you think of the music?' This struck me as going beyond what I had heard of a perfumed[1] Moderate minister in Scotland with a conceited precentor. The minister remarked one day that the church was full. 'Yes,' said the precentor, 'when you preach and I sing, the church is generally full!'"

The impression that Niagara makes upon those who see it for the first time is a psychological study. Allowance must of course be made for the varying condition of the object, by reason of season, weather, amount of water, and other causes; and for the condition of the observer in respect of health, spirits, expectations formed, and many other particulars. But it may be laid down as a general rule, that as the man is, so is his impression by this mighty object; and conversely, as is the impression, so is the man. It ought not to be so difficult to solve this converse problem as to solve that which

[1] Qu. "far-famed?"—T. S.

the naturalist encounters when he has to construct an animal from the *datum* of a tarsal bone. To the skilful student of humanity, therefore, I am confident of rendering an acceptable service, by placing before him Dr. Begg's account of his visit to the great cataract:—

"It is no part of my intention to attempt a description of this great wonder of nature. This has been done so often and so well, that any such attempt is quite unnecessary; but I may say that in some respects the reality was considerably different from my previous anticipations. Niagara is, as my readers know, the river which links Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. These two vast inland oceans pour into each other through that river,[1] and over those tremendous falls, and therefore one may well anticipate a magnificent result. But I had somehow or other expected a more mountainous country; some rocks and hills, as in our mountain torrents, standing out in relief to give greater effect and prominence to the mighty rush of waters. Instead of this, the surrounding country is comparatively flat, the river Niagara moves smoothly along, and only increases in rapidity as it approaches the gigantic falls, till it suddenly digs out for itself, if I may so speak, a great trough 160 feet deep and three-quarters of a mile broad for its tremendous leap. In order, therefore, to see it properly, one must get down into the bed of the river below the fall, and look up at the vast circuit and sweep of the wilderness of waters. It so happened that the river was frozen across immediately below the fall at the time of our visit, so that we could clamber down the steep sides and get upon it right opposite, and at a very small distance from the descending deluge, and although the ice was riven and torn in all directions, we pretty easily managed to walk over to the British side, and then leisurely to view all along the thundering cataract in all its perfection.

"After all, vast and overwhelming as it is, I am not sure that it is the greatest wonder of the New World. The vast internal oceans, and the interminable forests planted by the hand of God, were, to my mind, even more sublime and astonishing. At all events, I think they are more thoroughly

[1] That were indeed a "great wonder of nature." Of course, the writer meant that "one pours into the other."—T. S.

beyond the comprehension of a man who has only beheld the miniature scenery of our little island. A man who has seen the Falls of Clyde and of Foyers, can, by an effort of imagination, have some distant conception of Niagara, but of the others he can form no idea."

Again and again there are references to the great forests of America, and always in the same strain. I have no doubt that this extract will be generally accounted very prosaic, and so it is. Yet Dr. Begg was not an unimaginative man. May I suggest that if he had spent as many hours in gazing on the ceaseless pour of the cataract, noting the ever-changing aspects of its unchangeableness, as he was compelled to spend in travelling through the interminable forests, the former would have impressed him with as overwhelming a sense of infinity as did the latter.

I am not sure that the following extract is absolutely accurate as to the facts of the case—the Life of Dr. Candlish does not speak of an appointment having been actually made[1] —but the reflections are not the less appropriate:—

"I also visited a place called Dundas, in the neighbourhood of Hamilton, connected with which there is in my mind a very interesting circumstance. The very year before the great struggle began in Scotland, Dr. Candlish, who was then at Bonhill, in Dumbartonshire, applied to the Glasgow Colonial Society for an appointment abroad, being desirous to be more extensively useful. The society appointed him to Dundas; and, but for some providential circumstance, he would probably have gone and settled there. It is unnecessary to make the reflections to which this leads; they will occur to every mind. The circumstance is not unlike the arrest of Cromwell when about to sail for America; and it

[1] It is to be noted, however, that when Dr. Begg visited Dundas, he was the guest of Dr. Burns of Toronto, through whom the application had been made for colonial employment. If it was from him that Dr. Begg got his information—as most probably it was—it must have been correct. It should be noted further, that in Dr. Candlish's Life it is not said that the appointment was not made; it is only not said that it was made.—T. S.

strikingly illustrates the wonderful way in which God overrules the desires of His servants, and marks out the bounds of their habitation. There be many purposes in man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand. The vastest results hang also upon what may appear to us the most trifling contingency; but there are no contingencies with God. Let us be silent and adore."

The preceding extracts are from Dr. Begg's articles in the *Free Church Magazine;* the following are from his speech in the General Assembly of 1846, in which he gave an account of his mission. The account of a congregation at sea is graphic:—"It was more difficult to stick to the pulpit than the text, and often it was not easy to say which end of the congregation was uppermost." Equally graphic is his account of winter-travelling:—

"I travelled through that country at an inclement season. I entered it at the beginning of the frost, and left it at the end of the frost, and for three months and more I saw nothing but snow, frost, and ice. The country was locked up in the strong embrace of winter—all waters frozen like a pavement. The rivers and arms of the sea were strong and solid ice. Travelling with sledges was the only mode of passing to and fro among the inhabitants; and you may have some conception of it when I mention that you travel in these sledges wrapped up in strong buffalo and other skins, taken from the beasts of the forest, and with the thermometer sometimes 20 or 30 degrees below zero. But you can scarcely imagine the cold, and you cannot have a vivid idea of the difficulties which present themselves in the way of a stranger, while a native is thoroughly accustomed to them, and thinks nothing of them. Let me mention one or two things that occurred to myself, to show how discouraging it must be for a man of little energy, and a stranger, to go out to that country. The first time I travelled across an arm of the sea, frozen like a pavement, I was in a sledge drawn by a single horse, under the charge of a very smart and intelligent boy. Only a few had crossed before we started, and we started with hesitation, as the ice was very weak. Having

reached the centre of that arm of the sea, about a mile broad, I saw the horse strike his feet through the ice, and in an instant the boy, with the quickness of lightning, applied his whip to the noble animal, which, with one spring, cleared us of the difficulty, and started at a gallop for the opposite shore. The boy said, 'It is high time we were out of this.' I said, 'I think it is. If that horse,' said I, 'had gone down there, should we have got him out?' He said, 'If we had got ourselves out, it is all that we could expect. And Dr. Donolly's horse,' continued he, 'went down through the ice last winter, and he did not see him again till March, when, I suppose, he was not much worth seeing.' This reminded me of the story of a boy who guided a man across the Solway sands, near Dumfries. The boy was asked by the man, who began to be apprehensive, if people ever were lost there. The boy coolly replied, 'My father was drowned here, but we found him again.'"

I have said that Dr. Begg seems never to have carried out his purpose of giving a full account of his visit to the United States. All the more valuable are the fragmentary references to it that he made on various occasions. The following I take from the Assembly speech:—

"Having finished that work, I returned to Montreal, and proceeded through the United States. I visited New York, and preached five times there, and went thence to Philadelphia. From Philadelphia I went to Washington, and there I had the privilege of preaching the Gospel to the Congress of the United States, standing in the Vice-President's chair. I had also the honour of an interview with some of the leading statesmen of that country, including the President [1] himself, who traces his descent from Scotland, and alleges that, by the mother's side, he is connected with John Knox. Whether he be in all respects a worthy descendant of the great Reformer I will not pretend to say, but at the time I can say that he treated me with great courtesy and kindness. His conversation indicated that he took an interest in the Free Church, and that he also took some interest in the sanctification of the Lord's Day. . . . I afterwards visited the

[1] President Polk.—T. S.

deeply interesting College of Princeton, and after reaching New York and Boston, where also I preached and addressed a meeting, I returned to this country."

Further on in the same speech he says:—

"I had some intercourse with Christians in the United States of America. I saw many excellent men there; and I could bear my testimony, as I have done before, to this fact, that while our Voluntary friends in this country at one time, in my opinion, thought far too much of America, as if it were a perfect paradise, and without a fault, they have now swung to the other extreme, and many of them now think far too little of America. For my own part, I found many delightful Christians in America. I never spent a more interesting day, for example, than I did at Princeton, visiting the sepulchres of Jonathan Edwards and Wotherspoon, and holding intercourse with such men as Dr. Alexander, Dr. Miller, and Dr. Hodge. I afterwards received a letter from Dr. Miller, from which I take leave to read the following extract."

[The extract is as to the relation of the American Churches to slavery, the interest of which has now happily passed away for ever. After reading it, the speaker entered with great earnestness into the "*Send back the money*" controversy.]

"We shall not at present break our connection with the Christians—the multitude of noble Christians—on the other side of the Atlantic and their missionaries scattered over all parts of the world. We will not send back the money. We will not send back one farthing of the money. The money is not the worst thing that has come across the Atlantic. If I had the choice of what I would send back, I, as a friend of the slave, would send, and that right speedily, something else than the money,[1] and bring over some of the Christian men of America, the true friends of the slave, who, actuated by Christian principle, would speak like Christian men, and who

[1] The special American import which Dr. Begg would gladly have had exported was doubtless an eloquent agitator who originated the controversy, and who afterwards became Member of Parliament for one of the districts of London.—T. S.

take the Word of God for their guide. With these men we will cheerfully co-operate, not only in promoting the cause of Christ, but in maintaining that all the Churches of America are bound to take up, and to keep up, a testimony against that atrocious system, and never let that testimony down till the last manacle shall be struck from the last slave."

All through his after life Dr. Begg very frequently referred to his preaching in the Congress Hall, and to his visit to Princeton. I am indebted to my friend, Mr. Salmond of Glasgow—himself a Princeton student—for a note addressed to him in answer to a request that he had made at the time of Dr. Hodge's death for some information respecting him :—

"50 GEORGE SQUARE, EDINBURGH,
November 17, 1879.

"DEAR MR. SALMOND,—I have often heard Dr. Cunningham refer to the late Dr. Hodge in the highest terms. He regarded him as decidedly one of the greatest theologians of modern times. My own visit to Princeton was brief, but to me very interesting. At that time—fully thirty years ago—there were three pre-eminent Presbyterian ministers in the world, viz., Dr. Chalmers, Dr. Cooke of Belfast, and Dr. Hodge of Princeton. The two former I had the honour and privilege of knowing intimately, and I was anxious to see Princeton, partly as an old Paisley minister, to stand at the grave of Wotherspoon, but mainly to see Dr. Hodge. I preached to the students there—although, I hope, with due humility—the group of eminent professors being present. Dr. Hodge I found possessed of all the respect and influence to which his eminent talents and attainments justly entitled him, and yet, like all truly great men, marked by the utmost simplicity and unpretending humility of manner. The removal of such men seems a great loss to the Church below; bnt the great King and Head of the Church ever lives, and we must 'be still and know that He is God.'—Yours ever faithfully,

"JAMES BEGG.

"Rev. Charles A. Salmond."

In the poverty of materials for depicting my friend, not as he was in the pulpit, on the platform, or in the arena of eccle-

siastical controversy, but as he was in his daily life among his friends, I am happy to be able to give some slight reminiscences of the Canadian tour by one of his associates in it, or rather in part of it. On application to my friend, the Rev. Mr. MacTavish of Inverness, I received the following :—

"CROMARTY, *August* 17, 1885.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I regret much that all the information which I can give is of no great value. Dr. Begg, Mr. Stevenson, Pulteneytown, and I sailed from Liverpool in December 1845, for Halifax, Nova Scotia, where we arrived after what was counted a good winter passage of twelve days. Dr. Begg was confined part of the time to his berth, and refused to try the effect of air and exercise, saying *that* was for a man in health, and not for one who was sick. The only incident of the voyage which I remember in which he took part was :—As we three, with one or two others, stood round the capstan with ——, he swore, and we without any remark turned and walked away. I did not hear another profane remark from him. In Halifax Dr. Begg and I lived in separate houses, but met daily at the Rev. Mr. Robb's. A public meeting was held, at which Dr. Begg and I both spoke. We did so at some length, with the effect of impressing the meeting with a deeper sense of the wrong done to our Church, and of the faulty position occupied by those who submitted to the decisions of the judges and the conditions imposed by them and sanctioned by Parliament.

"Dr. Begg, being much interested in education, wished Mr. Robb to accompany him to Upper Canada—now the province of Ontario—to study its educational system. Their plan was that I should remain and supply Mr. Robb's place in his absence. This, however, I refused to do, as I was sent out specially in the interests of the Gaelic-speaking people. I left Halifax as soon as there was snow enough. Dr. Begg followed a few days later, and I had the pleasure of hearing him preach in Pictou to a considerable congregation. The next day he left for St. John's, New Brunswick, and we met no more on that continent. I remember his telling me in Pictou that he could recall every sermon that he had preached.

"I regret that this statement is so meagre. Mr. Steven-

son, who met Dr. Begg again in Montreal, may be able to give you more information. My intercourse with Dr. Begg since my return to Scotland was very limited—confined almost entirely to the stairs of the Free Church Offices, and concerned mainly the rationalistic tendencies of the day, and the condition of the agricultural classes. We differed, as you know, widely as to what should be done with the Established Church; but on those other questions our views were, I believe, in accord,—Yours very truly, JOHN MACTAVISH.

"Rev. Dr. Smith."

Having thus given in considerable detail an account of the American trip, I must notice some of Dr. Begg's proceedings after his return. On the Monday preceding the meeting of the General Assembly of 1846, the foundation stone was laid of the Knox Monument, and in connection therewith a great meeting was held of the "Friends of the Reformation." Very naturally Dr. M'Crie, son of the biographer of Knox, was the chief speaker. Mr. Thomson of Banchory, a descendant of Knox, was in the chair. To Dr. Begg it was assigned to "make a few observations on the subject of education in connection with the Scottish Reformation." In an eloquent speech he detailed the educational plan of the Scottish Reformers, and advocated a strong effort for its fulfilment. The following extract is of permanent interest in itself, and as striking the keynote, which he kept up all his days in the advocacy of the union of religious and secular education, and the extension of its blessings to all our people:—

"There are three points in the plan of Knox which I think worthy of notice. First, he goes on the idea, the clear perception, that all men are infinitely valuable, as being possessed of immortal souls, and proper subjects of that Gospel which the Lord Jesus Christ has enjoined to be preached to every creature, to the poorest of the poor as well as the greatest of the land. On this ground he repudiated, on the one hand, the Popish maxim—which is still the Popish maxim, notwithstanding all professions to the contrary—

that 'ignorance is the mother of devotion;' and on the other, the maxim of the infidel, that men should be left to themselves in regard to spiritual knowledge; that they should be taught only secular knowledge, that spiritual knowledge would come afterwards, thus leaving Satan in full possession of the field; thus leaving the field to grow a crop of tares, and then leaving to ministers the task of planting the good seed of the Word. On the other hand, Knox maintained that all men being equally possessed of immortal souls, and equally the objects of the Divine command, 'Preach the gospel to every creature,' should be taught spiritual knowledge from the very first. Not only so, but it is most important to observe that, coupled with this, the plan of our great Reformer embraces plans of the utmost moment in regard to wholesome secular knowledge. It is a rule that there can be no inconsistency between the works of God and the Word of God; and so it is not the amount of information that Christianity has to dread, but the deficiency of information. . . . It was the principle of the Reformers, and they maintained it strongly, that there should be higher secular education, and that the sons of the poorest of the people, if possessed of talents, should be trained to fill offices of eminence in the State as well as in the Church."

In the Assembly of 1846 the promoters of the Evangelical Alliance were put on their defence, a motion being made by Professor Gibson, virtually disapproving their action, in mild terms indeed, and giving them all credit for good intentions. The defence was conducted mainly by Dr. Candlish and Dr. Begg, who did not ask that the Church should sanction the action of the Alliance, or of its own ministers and members who had joined it, but only that it should be left to all on their own responsibility, to take part with the Alliance or to forbear. The discussion was exceedingly animated, but was conducted in admirable spirit and temper. The following is the closing paragraph of Dr. Begg's speech in seconding Dr. Candlish's motion:—

"I do not say that I am very sanguine, or that I expect great results from the movement which has taken place. It

may not lead to any great ultimate object; but the movement itself is in the right direction. I rejoice that we started in that movement. I never will but bless God that I was privileged to be present at the Liverpool meeting; for a more solemn meeting—a more heart-stirring, refreshing, reviving meeting than that—I never had the privilege of witnessing. And I thank God that when we see the common enemy approaching on every side, and when we hear the crush of the hedge, which declares the presence of the boar in the vineyard, many who hold a common faith and a common object are come together to look one another in the face, and can speak to each other, and in concert consider what may be done with the view of healing our long existing divisions. Sir, I conclude just as I began, by saying that I do not ask others to take the same view as I do; but I ask to be allowed to form my own independent judgment, and to act as a free man. I hope there will always be free discussions allowed in our Church. The question is not 'Do you agree with us?' The question is, 'Will you not permit us, will you prohibit us from using our liberty in this matter, and will you adopt a principle which by and by may lead you to expel us from your communion?' It is a solemn thing you are called upon to do. The motion of Mr. Gibson is, no doubt, not very distinct; but if it means anything different from that of Dr. Candlish, it will form a principle which will lead to censure and discipline, the result of which will be to make Presbyterianism itself indefensible, by making it the means of thwarting the cause of Christ, and destroying that liberty with which Christ has made us free."

The vote of the Assembly was 311 to 7, a majority of 304 in favour of Dr. Candlish's motion.

This appears to have been the first discussion in the Free Church Assembly that amounted to a debate. It was the first occasion on which we see a tendency to the formation of two currents of thought, which afterwards developed into two parties. It is noteworthy that those whom Dr. Begg opposed on this occasion were afterwards influential members of the party of which he was the acknowledged leader.

This naturally suggests that either he must have changed his ground or they must have changed theirs, for how else could those have come to be united who were then opposed? The supposition is a natural one, but I am persuaded that it is erroneous. Dr. Gibson and his supporters certainly did not alter their position. The course which they adopted in 1846 was in the same direction with that which they followed in subsequent years. In fact the arguments employed by Dr. Gibson against the Evangelical Alliance in 1846 were substantially those which he employed against union with the United Presbyterians in 1863. I have no doubt that at the earlier date Dr. Begg would have opposed as strenuously as Dr. Gibson a proposal for ecclesiastical union with those with whom he heartily co-operated in the Evangelical Alliance. But no such proposal was made. And when such a proposal was made twenty years later, Dr. Begg could oppose it as consistently as could Dr. Gibson. In point of fact Dr. Begg in 1876 went heartily into the formation of the Pan-Presbyterian Council, which approached nearer to union, in some respects, than did the Evangelical Alliance. I suppose that in 1846 Dr. Begg would not have been less unwilling than Dr. Gibson to go so far as they both refused to go in 1867. Only Dr. Begg at the earlier date was willing to go further than Dr. Gibson.

At the same assembly Dr. Begg spoke strongly in giving in a report as to the claims of the Established Church to the chapels or *quoad sacra* churches. The greater number of these had been built not long before the Disruption, at the expense of persons of whom many, in many cases most, and in some very nearly all, were now Free Churchmen. The ministers and office-bearers also had generally "come out." But the Established Church claimed the property, and rejected all proposals of compromise. Their plea, of course, was that it was not in their own interests that they claimed it; but they had no right to consent to the aliena-

tion from the Church of property which legally belonged to her, and of which they were only the trustees. The claim was allowed by the Court of Session in one or two test cases, and the Free Church gave up the contest, convinced that if *law* was against her, *equity* was to a large extent on her side. There were some cases of more special hardship than others. The General Assembly had very properly made it a condition of the sanction of these churches that they should not bear any burden of debt. In some cases, therefore, individuals had made themselves personally responsible for considerable sums. The churches, of course, were claimed by the Establishment without reference to such obligations; and so men were obliged not only to hand over the churches which they had built, but to meet obligations of several hundreds of pounds! The Assembly appointed a committee on the subject, with Dr. Begg as convener. But it seems to have been felt from the first that the matter was a forlorn hope, that success was unattainable, and that all that could be done was to protest strongly against a flagrant wrong. Dr. Begg reported, on behalf of this committee, to the August Commission, and proposed that an effort should be made to obtain an Act of Parliament for the redress of so great a wrong. He closed by stating: "I have been told, upon what I reckon good authority, that there are many laymen in the Church Establishment who are most anxious to assist us in this matter, because they regard it, at least in reference to some churches, as so equitable, that they are anxious that we should obtain a measure which will secure the churches for the objects for which they were believed to be built. However that may be, I think we should leave no stone unturned by which to secure this object." The action of the Established Church in this matter was both "a crime and a blunder." Some of the churches from which Free Church congregations were ejected remained for years unoccupied. I believe some are so to this day. It is not advantageous to the Established

Church to have their desolate walls exhibited as monuments of a dog-in-the-manger policy!

Dr. Begg was present at a meeting of the Evangelical Alliance in London in the end of August, but took very little part in the proceedings.

On the 25th of November 1846 Dr. Begg married Miss Maria Faithfull, daughter of the Rev. Ferdinand Faithfull, of Headley Rectory, Surrey. There was a good deal of gossip at the time—with more of truth in it than gossip on such matters generally possesses—as to love at first sight, a romantic courtship, and a speedy engagement. All that I have a right to say, all that the public has a right to know, is, that if it was a case of hasty marrying, it was not one of leisurely repenting.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SOCIAL QUESTIONS—FREE CHURCH EDUCATION SCHEME —GOVERNMENT EDUCATION SCHEME—QUOAD SACRA CHURCHES — COMMITTEE ON SITES — DEATH OF DR. CHALMERS — CALL TO DUMFRIES — NEWINGTON CHURCH—BECOMES DOCTOR OF DIVINITY.

HITHERTO Dr. Begg had not taken any prominent part in the discussion of social questions, excepting as these were incidentally associated with religious or ecclesiastical movements. It will appear in the sequel how heartily he entered into the advocacy of all measures which he regarded as tending to the social and economic wellbeing of the people. To such an extent did he carry this that there were not wanting those who regarded him as descending from the evangelic to the philanthropic level, and failing to follow the apostolic example of knowing nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I shall have no difficulty at the proper time in vindicating him against this charge. In the meantime I shall only say that he never regarded religion as designed to be separate from the daily life of men, but as necessarily bearing upon all educational, economical, social, and moral relations. In this, I may say that he differed *toto cœlo* from those who consider that religion *consists* merely in the avoidance of social and economic evils and in the practice of philanthropic virtues. Never a man had less sympathy with the constantly quoted maxim—

> "For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
> His can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

But never a man had a stronger conviction that the same godliness which is profitable for the life which is to come, is profitable also for the life which is now.

On the 5th of January 1847 a meeting was held in the Music Hall on behalf of early shop-shutting. Dr. Begg moved—"That . . . the meeting are of opinion that the curtailment of the hours of business is quite practicable, and will never operate against the interests of the employer, nor cause inconvenience to the public." In the course of his speech he read the following extract from a note which he had received that afternoon. "I pray you to speak a word in favour of the poor shop-girls, who are often so fatigued with the late hours on Saturday night that we are hardly able to walk home, and cannot get up on the Sabbath morning to go to church. Such is the grasping disposition of many even among professing Christian shopkeepers. Do not suppose that we are free when the shop-doors are closed, as we are detained till all the odds and ends of the goods are made up; and much evil follows, and no good, from such a practice."

The Free Church Education Scheme originated in the necessity of providing maintenance and employment for numerous teachers who had been ejected from the parochial schools on account of their adherence to the Free Church. No Free Churchman ever dreamed of withdrawing his children from a parochial school on the ground that the teacher of it might be an Established Churchman. Neither did any one imagine that teachers who were Free Churchmen ought to inculcate the distinctive principles of the Free Church on their pupils. It would have been absurd to make such an attempt; and I do not think that in all the heat of the controversy the charge of making it was ever brought against any teacher. But when Free Churchmen were ruthlessly ejected from the schools, on no other ground than that of their being Free Churchmen, the Church was compelled to institute an educational scheme, not on sectarian grounds, but as a defence against a sectarian movement on the part of others. Nothing shows more clearly the hold that the Free Church

had of the minds of the people than the marvellous success of her educational operations. In this connection I am very glad to have an opportunity of adding another to innumerable expressions, by all kinds and classes of men, of thankfulness to my co-presbyter, Dr. Macdonald of North Leith (then Mr. Macdonald of Blairgowrie), as the chief promoter of a scheme which conferred unspeakable blessings on a generation, and contributed largely to the preparation of the community for the national system which has superseded it. Before the time which we have now reached, Free Church schools were established all over the country. They had generally been erected in convenient localities, so as to present no hostile aspect to the previously existing schools, while a natural rivalry provided a stimulus which was salutary to both classes of teachers, and highly promotive of the educational interests of the several districts. I do not suppose that any one will deny that we have made great progress in elementary education in Scotland in recent times; and I do not think that any one can fairly deny that the institution of the Free Church Education Scheme had a chief part in originating and impelling that progress. Of course I am quite aware of the reciprocal action of times upon men, and of men on their times. And it is quite possible that the impulse would have come from some other quarter if it had not come from this. But, in point of fact, it was from this quarter that it came, and it came chiefly through the enlightened zeal and indefatigable energy of Robert Macdonald.

It has sometimes been said, and oftener hinted, that the Free Church Educational Scheme proved a failure, and that, in order to get rid of the responsibilities of it, the leading men in the Free Church brought their influence to bear upon the Government to induce them to introduce a national system. I do not believe that there is any truth in this statement. The Free Church scheme was *not* a failure; it was a success, educationally and financially. I have no reason to believe

that Free Churchmen specially advocated the introduction of a national system; although, of course, they were willing to acquiesce in any arrangement which promised to improve the quality of the ordinary education, and to conserve the distinctive character of Scottish education in respect of religious instruction.

We shall have a good deal to say about this subject in the sequel. In the meantime we have only to notice the fact, that at the time which we have now reached (1847), the Church set itself earnestly to the consideration of the constitution of its own schools, in respect of their control by the Education Committee, and the election and dismissal of teachers. There was naturally considerable difference of opinion regarding these matters; and I notice that in the month of February Dr. Begg, in the Presbytery of Edinburgh, carried, by a majority of two, a motion against one by Dr. Candlish. But the difference was only respecting details. There was complete agreement with respect to all matters involving principle, and the general mode in which the schools were to be conducted. At a subsequent meeting (7th April) Dr. Candlish moved for a committee to consider and report on the proposed grants by the Privy Council for schools in England. The Voluntaries had organised a strenuous opposition to these grants, and had held a large public meeting in Edinburgh; and it was quite necessary that the Free Church should make up and express its mind on the subject. Dr. Begg, while not acquiescing in all the views stated by Dr. Candlish, very cordially supported his motion for the appointment of a committee.

There is a comparatively small, but not an unimportant, subject to which Dr. Begg seems to have been the first to direct the attention of his brethren. At the meeting of the Presbytery in March, "Mr. Begg brought under the notice of Presbytery the practice of drinking at funerals, stating that he and the other brethren had received circulars asking them

to recommend their congregations from the pulpit to discontinue the practice, which he thought should be done." It is pleasant to think that this now seems a small matter, scarcely worthy of the attention of the Presbytery of Edinburgh. It does so simply because the practice has been so discontinued in the Lowlands, and so diminished in the Highlands, that the present generation are incapable of estimating the evil of it as it was formerly in use over all the country.

On the 17th of April the committee appointed on the 7th gave in an elaborate report, which gave rise to an animated discussion. As a keen controversy afterwards arose, in the course of which Free Churchmen—and notably Dr. Begg—were charged with inconsistency, and with changing their views from motives of self or denominational interest, and as I shall be necessitated to take notice of this controversy in its proper place, it will be well now to extract the main portion of Dr. Begg's first public speech on the subject of national education. The report of the committee, given in by Dr. Candlish, recommended the Presbytery to petition for delay, till the Government scheme could be more fully considered; and went on to assert certain principles which ought to be carried out in any national system. These principles I shall state in an abridged form. (1.) It is very strongly asserted that it is the duty of States and their rulers to advance and promote the education of the people, and that Christian Churches should be willing, as far as they conscientiously can, to concur with the civil government in forwarding this end. (2.) It is asserted equally strongly that any general system to be adopted ought to be based on religious truth, and pervaded by a religious spirit; and that "it is an imperative obligation lying on the Church at present to be peculiarly on the watch against any system which may seem to tend towards the giving of public countenance and encouragement to Popery, Socinianism, and infidelity, and other forms of error, as well as to the sound Protestantism of the

Evangelical Churches of the country." After the seconding by Dr. Duncan of the motion to adopt the report, and a powerful speech by Dr. Cunningham,—

"Mr. Begg said that the Presbytery must rejoice that the committee had been able so far to come to a unanimous report upon the very difficult subject which had occupied their attention. They did not see their way so clearly as some of their brethren[1] did,—they were not quite so far advanced. The substance of the report was that they wished for more time and more light. They had, however, certain decided principles which were announced in the report; but with regard to the scheme of the Government they were anxious for delay and for further information; and it was therefore recommended to the Presbytery to petition Parliament, praying for time to enable them to consider the subject in all its bearings. He did not intend to go over any of the ground already occupied; but these two questions—first, what was the duty of the Government, and second, what was their own duty—though quite distinct, and important to be discussed separately, were yet considerably mixed up together. He did not consider it desirable altogether to preclude the latter question, though there was at present perhaps more urgency with regard to the former—viz., with respect to the duty of Government in the matter of education. In regard especially to England, that was a somewhat complicated question in the present state of the country; not that he had any difficulty on the principle that Government was not entitled in any circumstances or state of the country to support what was flagrantly inconsistent with the Word of God. But even after that was admitted, there was great difficulty, in regard to England especially, arising from the immense number of sects that prevailed there, and the state of the Established Church. But in connection with that point, it had often occurred to him as very desirable that they should separate the case of Scotland altogether from that of England; that they should see their way to recommend something to Government with regard to

[1] The reference is to the English Voluntaries, who were for condemning the scheme on the ground that the Government ought not to support the teaching of any religion.—T. S.

Scotland, substantially right in itself, and which would in reality be of national extent, because in the matter of education they were very far ahead of England. That subject had been discussed in Scotland many, many years, even centuries back—discussed and settled at a time when this country was not so divided and broken up into sections; they had the advantage of a system of education based upon principles of which they approved, with the exception that it had, in consequence of the Disruption, become exclusively attached to the Established Church—a system which was based on a recognition of the Divine Word, the Confession of Faith, and the Shorter Catechism. It would be very important if they could recommend the reformation and extension of that system to the Government as the basis of a sound national system of education for Scotland. He had referred to this before; and he did not press it on the committee, simply because, from the communication that had been received by the Committee from the Lord Advocate, they had learnt that the present Government scheme would have no bearing upon the parochial schools; but he hoped before the meeting of the General Assembly that they would have other opportunities of considering the subject, for he saw great difficulty in carrying out the scheme in its present form, without the reformation of the parish schools. For example, if they would take a parish with a population of six or seven hundred people, one school and one teacher was sufficient. But if that school was of sectarian character, out of which the adherents of the Free Church had been driven, they must supply another school, and another teacher. Now if they applied for Government aid, one of two answers might be given. If the Government, without trying to reform the existing system, consented, it would be a plain waste of the public money to support two schools where one would be sufficient. Or Government might say, though they had no objection to support schools in connection with the Free Church, yet they would judge for themselves as to the localities of these schools, and in all such cases, and those the most necessitous, refuse money altogether, and thus clog and hamper our own educational scheme. This matter of the parish schools must, therefore, immediately be looked at, or it would be found a great obstacle in their way.

On that ground, and as they occupied high vantage-ground with regard to Scotland, having a system in existence capable of reformation, he thought it worthy of consideration whether they should not immediately recommend to Government something satisfactory, not only to them, but to the whole evangelical dissenters of the country.

"With regard to the second question, that of their own duty, if they found Government persevering, notwithstanding the remonstrances addressed to them, in carrying through anything found to be objectionable in their scheme, he thought it was not unattended with difficulties. It was no doubt a difficult question, though not in regard to the principle. He was glad that Dr. Cunningham had spoken out. There was no ground of principle requiring them to refuse a grant for a good object, because, in spite of our remonstrances, one might be also given for a bad object. Such a principle was absurd and dangerous. But as a question of expediency, he thought it would be, in some of its bearings, and in our peculiar position, one of the most difficult that the Free Church had ever been called to grapple with, though they should not allow any one to suppose that they were committed at all, or that they would be prevented from accepting the money of Government for the purpose of doing what was good, although the Government should persist in applying a portion of the money in doing what was evil."

Before this time the Government scheme had been condemned by a majority of the Free Church Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, led by Dr. Robert Buchanan. The *Scottish Guardian*, in several articles, reprobated the action of the Edinburgh Presbytery, and of the minority of the Glasgow Synod, led by Sir Henry Moncreiff, then minister of East Kilbride. This led to letters addressed to the *Witness* by Dr. Cunningham, Dr. Begg, and Sir Henry Moncreiff on the one side, and by Dr. Robert Buchanan on the other, as well as numerous correspondents on either side. The editor of the *Witness* strenuously vindicated the position of the unanimous presbytery and the minority of the Synod.

The subject was again discussed at great length in the

Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, an overture to the General Assembly being proposed by Dr. Candlish, seconded by Dr. Begg, and unanimously agreed to. Up till this time, then, there was no essential difference betwixt the views of these two men with respect to the subject of Christian national education.

At the meeting of the General Assembly in May, Dr. Begg gave in the report of the committee on *quoad sacra* churches. The following paragraph contains the gist of his speech:—

"This then was the state of the question as he (Mr. Begg) understood it. In interposing in the matter, the General Assembly did not intend to make a stand on the legal question. They left the litigants to urge their own case in the civil courts; but they took up the matter on higher grounds, and they said that, in the estimation of all fair and impartial men, whatever claim the Establishment might have in law—and that claim they did not admit—they had no claim in equity to take and keep the whole of their churches, and they held, moreover, that in every sense of the word it was most unrighteous to turn these congregations out of their churches. That being the case, the question was, what should be done? Now the committee recommended one or two points to the consideration of the Assembly. In the first place, it was most desirable to receive more perfect information, and for this purpose they proposed issuing schedules to the presbyteries of the Church, and if these were properly filled up, all the information required would be obtained. Then, again, it was the opinion of the committee that they were bound to go to Parliament to ask for its interference to put an end to the litigation, and to do them simple justice. He held that Parliament was bound to interfere to terminate the harassing litigation which at present existed, and to bring the matter to an equitable conclusion. But before going to Parliament, they considered that they ought to take up the question as a merely pecuniary, and not as an ecclesiastical matter. It was a dispute about buildings and temporalities, and in such a dispute they should act in the same way as they would act as private individuals; they ought not to relinquish their claims until they had exhausted every means of establishing them.

And just as they held that private individuals, in matters of worldly interest, were bound to approach the individuals with whom they were at issue, and to say: 'We wish you to concede to us what are our rights, and no more,' in like manner the committee held that it was the duty of that Assembly to approach the Assembly of the Established Church, and to say to them—'Gentlemen, here is a case in which we have already sustained injury, in which you threaten to inflict on us more injury. Our proposal is, that the matter shall be fairly and equitably adjusted—adjusted by the arbitration of persons mutually chosen, and being so adjusted, it shall be confirmed by Act of Parliament, and that Act shall be a final settlement of the whole question.' He therefore left this proposal with the Assembly, and asked them seriously to consider it."

Looking calmly back from this distance of time on the question as it then stood, I cannot but say that it appears to me that the proposal to go to Parliament at that time was an extremely injudicious and scarcely a constitutional one. The question as to the rightful ownership of their houses was one for the decision of the courts of law, if the claimants chose to have resource to these courts; and Parliamentary interposition at the stage which the matter had then reached would have been a virtual supersession of all law. It was otherwise with the proposed application to the Assembly of the Established Church. The Free Church honestly believed that a wrong was being attempted to be done. They were bound to believe that the Established Church was as unwilling to perpetrate wrong as the Free Church was unwilling to suffer it. It was altogether proper that the latter body should propose to the former to submit the whole matter to the arbitration of impartial men. We shall soon see the reception given by the Established Church Assembly to this application.

Dr. Begg took a prominent part in the proceedings of the Assembly of this year. He moved a resolution urging the Church to aid the Irish Presbyterian Church in their pro-

testant missionary efforts. Also the motion for the approval of the report on Sabbath observance. In connection with this he recommended that a memorial should be sent to the Directors of the North British Railway on the subject; and at a subsequent diet he submitted such a memorial as prepared by a committee. He further made a statement regarding the "Cheap Publication Scheme," of one department of which—the publication of the Catechism—he seems to have had special charge, probably as convener of a sub-committee, Dr. Candlish being convener of the committee as a whole.

The Government Education Scheme was discussed at great length in this Assembly. It was essentially and confessedly a compromise. It required that religious instruction should be given in all schools aided by Government grants; but made no provision as to the character of the religion to be taught. It was argued by many excellent members of the Assembly that if the Free Church accepted grants for her schools on these terms, she would be held as acquiescing in the appropriation of national funds for the teaching of Romanism and Socinianism. Dr. Begg very happily, as I think, illustrated the position which he, and a vast majority of the Assembly (294 to 5), were prepared to occupy. The following is the conclusion of his speech :—

"I cannot see that, by accepting the aid of Government in promoting our schools, if it is accepted along with a firm and decided testimony in favour of right principles, and in opposition to wrong ones, we in the slightest degree compromise the position we occupy as the Free Church of our land. Undoubtedly, however, if there be anything like an uncertain sound in regard to essential matters of principle, if there is anything like a concealing of our testimony as to the position we occupy, for the purpose of being on good terms with my Lord John Russell and the members of Her Majesty's Government, if there be the slightest concealment of our principles in connection with the reception of the Government measure, then I could see great force indeed

in the objection which has been urged. But if we continue to bear testimony against what is evil, I can see no more harm in accepting the aid of Government, than I can see evil in receiving my letters on Monday morning, because I know that they are conveyed by the Sabbath mail, if I do my duty in protesting against that Sabbath mail; or, as was remarked by another reverend friend, I can see no more evil in it than a member of a temperance society would see evil in making his coffee with water from the same well from which a neighbour took water to make his toddy. In point of fact, it appears to me to be the very same position as that in which we were placed before the Disruption happened at all. We took the support of Government, when, at the same time, we knew that the Government gave support to popery, and to other systems which we condemned. If by taking that money we had consented to bury our testimony, there would have been inconsistency; but as long as we bore our testimony, we never considered that, by accepting money for what was right, we necessarily countenanced the Government, or aided the Government in giving money for what was wrong, so long as we avoided temptation, and prevented it from injuring in the least our bold and uncompromising testimony against anything that might be wrong on the part of the Government."

By this Assembly Dr. Begg was appointed Convener of the Home Missions Committee, and we shall see that in this capacity he did good work for the Church and the people.

The application of the Free Church Assembly was forwarded to the Established Assembly. Its receipt was immediately acknowledged by the Moderator. It was referred to a committee, and in the course of a few days the Assembly intimated their peremptory rejection of the proposal made to them. When that answer was laid before the Free Church Assembly it was in its turn referred to Dr. Begg's committee, and on the following day he reported on it. Of course, nothing better than the refusal of the request had been anticipated; and therefore Dr. Begg's speech was little more than a repetition of the arguments which he and

others had used before. It is therefore unnecessary to make further reference to these arguments. But I may be excused if I notice in passing one or two happy "bits," which indicate that Dr. Begg's speaking was gradually assuming the aspect which in after days became so familiar to supporters and opponents and gallery-occupants. The following was destined to do service on many subsequent occasions:—"I remember once hearing of a worthy man—a good old minister of last century—that when he was told of such a person being a very fine man, his general answer was, 'Have you ever had any money transactions with him?'" The following is terribly severe, but not too severe if we postulate the rightness of the speaker's conviction as to the course of conduct pursued:—"If these churches are taken from us by the Church Establishment, there is a text which will be found appropriate for the opening of them. It is Job xx. 19, 20: 'Because he hath violently taken away an house which he builded not; surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly, he shall not save of that which he desired.'"

It was during the sitting of this Assembly that Scotland and the Free Church sustained the heaviest loss that could have befallen them, in the removal of the greatest man of our generation, Dr. Chalmers. It must have been a terrible shock when it was announced in the Assembly that that grand heart had ceased to beat, and that strong mind was no more to direct the counsels of the brethren, and that most eloquent voice was to be heard no more on earth. I well remember the effect produced by the tidings, when long afterwards—in those pre-telegraphic days—they reached us in India. It seemed to each of us as if he had lost his nearest relative or most intimate and beloved personal friend. And yet I may be pardoned for recording my first utterance after the blow descended—an utterance of which I have often thought since, and which may not at once command the reader's sympathy. It was to this effect: "Well, I am very glad.

It was a grand thing for the old hero, tired with a long day's noble work, to fold his arms and go to sleep. One could have borne—would almost have liked—to witness his enjoyment of his well-earned rest. But it had been a terrible thing to have had to think of Chalmers in the helplessness and dotage of a feeble old age. Yes! I am very glad."

All who are likely to be my readers are well aware that the last public appearance of Dr. Chalmers on behalf of his beloved Church was in the character of a witness before the Parliamentary Committee on the refusal of sites for churches. His evidence on that occasion is very memorable and very valuable. It not only exhibits no failure of his mental powers, but even shows an amount of readiness and rapidity of thought and utterance, which must, I should think, have surprised all his old students, and all who were aware of his comparative defect of the power of extemporaneous speech.

Dr. Begg was not examined by this committee; but he was more than once referred to in the questions put to witnesses. The object of a portion of the committee was to show that such violent language had been used by leading men of the Free Church in speeches, and by the editor of the *Witness* in articles, that proprietors were justified in refusing sites to a body who held such sentiments; in short, that the Free Church had put itself beyond the pale of legitimate toleration. Now it is quite true that strong language had been used. The friendly witnesses could not deny this. It would have been vain for them to attempt to convince the committee that the language, though strong, was not violent, but was justified by the facts of the case. They therefore endeavoured to show that the Church was not responsible for the sayings or the writings, even of its most prominent members. The examination of Sheriff Graham Spiers is amusing. The following is the portion of it relating to the matter in hand:—

Q. 252. [Sir J. Graham.]—You mentioned the name of Mr. Begg;[1] he is an eminent clergyman of the Free Church, I believe?—*A.* He is a minister of the Free Church.

Q. 253. Have you ever heard these words, reported to have been used by him with regard to the Duke of Buccleuch: "The Duke and all others must give way; they are welcome to come down as softly as they please from the bad eminence on which they have placed themselves, but they must clearly and unequivocally come down or be driven down"?—*A.* I do not remember these words. I have heard Mr. Begg speak very frequently in the General Assembly. If you can give me the date, I might.

Q. 254. It is reported in the *Edinburgh Post* of December 2, 1843.—*A.* That could not have been at the Assembly.

Further on the same questioner asks the same witness—

Q. 279. Is not Dr. Candlish among the most eminent of the ministers of the Secession?—*A.* Certainly, a very eminent man; but I do not suppose that everything that he says, or may have said, would be approved of by other individuals connected with the Free Church.

Q. 280. Mr. Begg is an eminent man among the ministers of the Assembly?—*A.* He is a minister of the Free Church.

Q. 281. Mr. Tweedie is not unknown?—*A.* No; they are all known. I would say, talking of eminence, that Dr. Candlish is probably of the greatest eminence.

The chairman (Mr. Bouverie, M.P.) afterwards asked Mr. Spiers—

Q. 338. You have been asked with reference to certain statements alleged to have been made by Dr. Candlish, Mr. Begg, Mr. Tweedie, and in the *Witness* newspaper; have you any knowledge at all about it.—*A.* I really have not. I cannot charge myself with recollecting any of those statements that have been referred to; nor do I think that statements made by those individuals enter into the question at

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[1] Merely with reference to the fact that Dr. Begg's congregation was removed to Newington, on account of the difficulty of obtaining a site in Liberton.—T. S.

all. In the answers I have had the honour to receive[1] from proprietors to whom I have applied for sites, they have rarely alluded to anything of the kind; and when they have, I have always expressed disapproval of it, and said that those were not the principles of the Free Church.

As to Dr. Begg's statement respecting the Duke of Buccleuch and other site-refusers, supposing that it was spoken by Dr. Begg precisely as it was quoted by Sir James Graham, I must say that I fail to see in it anything so very terrible. He speaks not of casting down His Grace from his dukedom, or of depriving him of his estates. Nothing is further from his thoughts than this. The position from which he is to be brought down is simply that of a site-refuser—that, and no more than that. Dr. Begg hoped that he would relinquish it with a good grace; if not, then he must be driven from it by a legal enactment. Aught more than this, or aught different from this, Dr. Begg did not say. Aught less than this I cannot see that he could have said in the circumstances; and, in point of fact, this is substantially what the committee unanimously—not even Sir James Graham dissenting—said in their report, which closes thus: "It appears from the evidence that, in the first heat of the secession, hostile intentions and feelings affecting the safety, and even the existence, of the Established Church of Scotland were avowed by certain leading members of the Free Church. It also appears that language, to be regretted on account of its violence, was used by members of the Establishment. This heat has abated, but the compulsion to worship in the open air, without a church, is a grievous hardship inflicted on innocent parties; and while your committee abstain from judging the motives which have led either to the secession or the refusal of sites, they hope that every just ground of complaint may be speedily removed by the voluntary act

[1] Mr. Spiers was convener of the Assembly's Committee on Sites.

of those whose property gives them the means of redressing a grievance, and thereby conciliating the good-will of a large body of their countrymen." The coincidence is all but perfect. Dr. Begg calls site-refusing a "bad eminence;" the committee call it "the infliction of a grievous hardship on innocent parties." What Dr. Begg calls "coming down softly" from the "bad eminence," the committee calls the "speedy removal of every just ground of complaint by the voluntary act of those whose property gives them the means of redressing a grievance." There is no specific statement, indeed, on the part of the committee corresponding to Dr. Begg's declaration that site-refusers who would not come down softly from the bad eminence must be driven from it. But who can doubt that such a legislative enactment as Dr. Begg contemplated must have followed, if the strong recommendation of the committee had been disregarded? Happily it was not disregarded, and I am sure that while all held the late Duke of Buccleuch in the highest respect, there was no one who respected him more sincerely than did Dr. Begg.

On the 18th of June we find Dr. Begg addressing a meeting in Exeter Hall on the subject of the missions of the Free Church, and urging the people of England to "help forward the missionary cause, till the knowledge of the Lord shall extend from shore to shore."

It must have come on the Newington people like a thunder-clap in a cloudless sky when it was announced to them that an attempt was about to be made to remove their minister to another field. In June of this year Dr. Begg was unanimously and enthusiastically elected to the pastorate of the Free Church at Dumfries. The call was numerously signed, was sustained by the Presbytery of Dumfries, and was in due course laid on the table of the Presbytery of Edinburgh. The reasons in favour of the translation, and answers to these reasons, were read. Members of the Presbytery of Dumfries were heard in favour of

the translation, and members of the Newington congregation in opposition to it. The question was then put by the Moderator whether Dr. Begg desired to address the Presbytery, whereupon—

"Mr. Begg said that he felt extreme difficulty in making a statement on the subject before them. At the same time, he should like at least to say, in the first place, that he felt the deepest attachment to his present congregation. A more united, a more agreeable, and a more zealously co-operating people, according to their means, no minister could wish to have. He thought it right to say, however, that he regarded the call which had been addressed to him to be, in his peculiar circumstances, the most important one that could have been addressed to him. He considered the congregation of Dumfries to be one of the most important in Scotland, and one the importance of which he had peculiar occasion to know;[1] and he would just say, in addition to what had been already stated, that not only had the South of Scotland suffered more severely than any other part of Scotland—with the exception, perhaps, of the North—from the blight of Moderatism, but was at present suffering under the tyranny of a very un-Christian aristocracy,[2] and also from the zeal of the Popish Church. On the other hand, he was able from experience to state that the people were most willing to listen to the Gospel; in fact, a people manifesting a deeper interest in the preaching of the Gospel than the people of the South of Scotland he never addressed. When he mentioned these facts to the Presbytery, he said about all that he could say on the subject. He had hitherto refused all calls addressed to him. He could not say that his mind had been made up on the subject now before him; and while, in ordinary circumstances, he would have held it his duty to have been more precise in a matter of that kind, he thought, in the peculiar circumstances of the case — the question being

[1] From his early ministry at Maxwelton, which, though in a different county, is virtually a part of the town of Dumfries.—T. S.

[2] With reference to what I said a few pages back, I think it proper to express my conviction that Dr. Begg did not intend to include the Duke of Buccleuch under the designation. In the circumstances, however, the expression was an injudicious one.—T. S.

chiefly argued on public grounds, of which it did not become him to speak at all—that the Presbytery would excuse him if he left the decision of it entirely to them, in whose judgment he would cordially acquiesce."

On the motion of Dr. Cunningham, the Presbytery, while fully admitting the importance of the Dumfries congregation, and the desirableness of having a man of power in such a place, unanimously refused the translation; and the commissioners from the congregation handsomely acquiesced in the decision, waiving their right of appeal, as their insisting on it would have kept both congregations in suspense for ten months, until the case should come before the next Assembly.

There seems to have been much "searching of heart" on the part of the Newington congregation in connection with the calamity—for such they would have deemed it—of the threatened removal of their minister, and with their deliverance from what they had feared. It is not therefore surprising, while it is specially pleasing, to find the following paragraph in the *Witness* of September 11, the next issue but one to that which contains the discussion in the Presbytery regarding the proposed removal to Dumfries:—

"NEWINGTON FREE CHURCH.—A meeting of the congregation of this church was held on Tuesday evening, to consider what plan ought to be adopted for the purpose of giving greater efficiency to their efforts for the spiritual good of the district amidst which they are placed. The meeting was addressed by Mr. Begg, Mr. Noble, and George Lees, Esq.; and it was most cordially and unanimously resolved greatly to improve the present church of Newington, and to add two efficient schools, and also, if possible, to place on a more permanent footing the missionary church and schools in the Causewayside. A subscription has been commenced for this purpose, and we understand that Mr. Begg has given £100 to begin with."

It was stated near the beginning of this volume that the

original Free Church of Newington was erected at a marvellously small cost. It was but an unsatisfactory makeshift at the best, and the time had fully come when its reconstruction, or its supersession by a more convenient structure, was an absolute necessity. Wisely or unwisely, the former course was determined on. The portion of the church farthest from the street was converted into school-rooms. The walls of the other portion were raised to double their original height, and the accommodation in the church subtracted by the formation of the school-rooms was compensated for by the construction of a gallery. A moderately ornamental front was added. Perhaps it would have been as well or better to have pulled down the old structure altogether; but this would have deprived future generations of an interesting relic. So far as I know, there is not in Edinburgh any other portion of an original Disruption church now used for public worship. A few buildings are indeed extant, and with more or less alterations have been converted to other uses. When the proposal of the congregation was brought before the Presbytery, it was very cordially approved, and gave occasion to the following characteristic statement by Dr. Guthrie. "Thousands of strangers were in the habit of coming to Edinburgh, and when they saw that the buildings in which the members of the Free Church worshipped were of an inferior kind, it gave them an idea which they had not had before, leading them to think that we were a low, mean, government-upturning, troublesome community. When, however, they found we were building churches of a respectable and ornamental kind, they entertained very different ideas of us. He had personal reasons, which he could state, why Mr. Begg's church should be made better. He had two or three times travelled from England to Scotland, and on his journey he had met with Englishmen of influence, station, and rank, with whom he entered into conversation. The subject of discourse naturally turned to the Free Church. He would mention

one case as an illustration of several others which had occurred. There was a gentleman on the top of the coach. When they came within sight of Scotland, the gentleman said, 'I hope the battle of the Sabbath will be successfully fought there.' They immediately entered into conversation, and the gentleman made inquiries about the Free Church. He said, 'I hope the Free Church is prospering. I am a minister of the Episcopal Church; but at the time of that great event (the Disruption) in Scotland, we met once a month for prayer, and we never forgot to pray for the party who were fighting for the truth there.' He (Mr. Guthrie) entered into details in answer to his questions, telling him of the large sums they had raised, and the churches they had built. He had just got to the end of his story, and had exhausted[1] the Free Church, placing her upon good substantial ground, when, to his horror, he saw Mr. Begg's church. Well, he wondered how he could get past that church, for he felt if his fellow-traveller saw it, down went the Free Church in a moment and his talent was set a-work to discover how he could get past the Newington nuisance; and he immediately hit upon the remarkable resemblance of Arthur's Seat to a lion! He pointed it out to his friend, and kept his eye fixed upon it till he got past Mr. Begg's church, when it was all right." Every one will of course understand that it was only in the exaggeration of playful banter that this structure could be described as the "Newington nuisance;" but in sober seriousness it was, according to all accounts, no ornament to the district.

I have now reached a point in my narrative, on which taking my stand, I can look my reader in the face with the proud consciousness of being henceforth a truth-speaking man. I stated in the preface to the previous volume that in order to avoid a clumsy periphrasis I had conferred brevet-rank on my friend. The *crime* of this does not lie very heavily on

[1] Qu. "exalted."—T.S.

my conscience. But the awkwardness of making quotations in which he is styled "Mr. Begg," in the midst of passages in which I have called him "Dr. Begg," convinced me, when too late, that I had committed a *blunder*. No wonder then though I transcribe, with a degree of satisfaction which some might deem excessive, the following note from the *Witness* of 3d November 1847:—

"THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF DIVINITY HAS BEEN CONFERRED BY THE LAFAYETTE COLLEGE, PENNSYLVANIA, ON THE REV. JAMES BEGG OF EDINBURGH."—(*Montreal Witness.*)

In estimating the value of this honorary degree, it is to be borne in mind that American degrees are of two classes. There are American degrees which confer no honour. But a Princeton Doctorship is justly regarded as the blue ribbon of our profession, and the Lafayette degree is but little inferior to it.

The work of the new church went on most satisfactorily. A grant of £200 was made by the Central Building Fund, but was generously returned, in order that more necessitous congregations might have the benefit of it; and in due course, as we shall see, the work was completed, and the congregation entered upon the occupancy of what was virtually a new edifice, while it retained much of the sacred associations which attached themselves to the old.

A great bazaar was held in order to aid in bearing the cost of the erection. So far as I know this was the first instance of a bazaar for such an object.[1] At all events they were

[1] To this bazaar I find a characteristic reference in the "Memorials of the Rev. Henry M. Douglas, minister of the Free Church, Kirkcaldy," by my former colleague in the New College, Dr. MacGregor. Mr. Douglas was then a schoolboy, and a member of the Newington congregation. He kept a journal or diary, of which his biographer gives an account. In the course of that account is the following passage:—

"He shows an immense admiration of his minister, who at this period is transfigured from plain *Mister* into learned *Doctor* Begg, by an institution

much rarer than they (perhaps unhappily) are now, and it was a great success. A volume of sermons was published, with a preface by Mr. Hugh Miller, and was sold in large numbers.

In November 1847 a great meeting was held in Edinburgh in connection with the newly formed "Sabbath Alliance." Dr. Begg made a long and powerful speech, in the course of which he introduced an argument which he constantly repeated in after years. It is substantially this: There is a certain amount of labour to be performed, a certain number of labourers ready to be employed in the performance of it, and a certain sum of money ready to be paid as wages. Now if the number of labourers were increased, while the work and the pay remained the same, it is evident that the wages of each would be diminished in the same proportion in which the number of labourers was increased. Now the employment of the labourers seven days instead of six is simply tantamount to increasing the number of the labourers by one for every six. Each one then would only get the same pay for seven days' work that he would otherwise have got for six. It is therefore the special interest of working men to resist the desecration of the Sabbath by labour. This argument has been often ridiculed; but I am persuaded that it is unanswerable, and absolutely valid as against Sabbath labour. But nobody now advocates or vindicates Sabbath labour, ex-

mysteriously vast—'the College of America.' For this divine a new church is being erected. In aid of the building fund they are getting up a bazaar—or, if you dislike the name, a 'sale,' and Henry turns his geological knowledge to account by making up a little museum of geological specimens, which go for twelve shillings to a gentleman whom he illuminates about their nature and value. He also beats up among his friends for subscribers to a volume of twelve sermons, contributed by leading Free Church ministers in aid of the sale, but of which, unhappily, a good many copies remain unsold."

The meaning of the last sentence must be, not that copies remained unsold at the time of Dr. MacGregor's writing, but at the date of the diary immediately after the bazaar. I have had no little difficulty in procuring a copy of the volume.—T. S.

cepting in cases of "necessity or mercy." In this department the sole question is as to what constitutes "necessity;" and the friends of the Sabbath have yet much to do in correcting misconceptions on that point,—showing, for example, that there is no necessity for a great part of our post-office and railway work. The great question now is not as to Sabbath labour, but as to the character of the Sabbath rest, which all, on one ground or other, admit to be essential to the well-being of our people. Dr. Begg's favourite argument is not directly applicable to this phase of the question, but indirectly it is; for not only does Sabbath amusement, or relaxation, as it is called, whether in the way of excursions or exhibitions, involve Sabbath labour, but the only ground on which we can claim exemption from Sabbath labour is the Divine authority, and that authority requires that the Sabbath-day be remembered so as to be kept holy. Here, again, there will be controversy between Christian and unchristian men, and there may well be differences of opinion among Christian men themselves as to the consistency or inconsistency of certain things with that holiness wherewith the Sabbath is to be kept. No intelligent Christian, certainly not Dr. Begg, ever conceived that gloom and sadness are synonymous with holiness.

CHAPTER XXX.

NATIONAL EDUCATION—HOME MISSIONS—CONGREGATIONAL SUPPLEMENTS — ANTI-VOLUNTARYISM — REFUSAL OF SITES BILL.

Dr. Begg continued to take a lively interest in the great question of national education. In February 1848 he introduced the following overture into the Presbytery of Edinburgh:—

"It is humbly overtured by the Presbytery of Edinburgh that the General Assembly, while prosecuting her own Education Scheme, shall use every effort to render as efficient and as generally available as possible the existing public provision for education in Scotland, whether in colleges or schools, by endeavouring, according to the tenor of the third section of the fourth Act of Assembly 1847, to procure the amendment or abolition of those Acts of Parliament which, in consequence of a perversion of their original design, are understood to give an exclusive control over the colleges and parish schools of Scotland to the existing Church Establishment; as also to secure such other reforms of the existing system, especially in regard to the branches taught, the mode of appointing teachers, and their suitable remuneration and government, as are not only proper in themselves, but manifestly required by the altered circumstances of the country."

The transmission of the overture was seconded by Dr. Candlish, who, while cordially endorsing all that Dr. Begg had said in its support, certainly emphasised more strongly than his friend had done the necessity of making provision for securing the religious character of the teaching in public or national schools. I remember that, long afterwards, I said, in the General Assembly or the Commission, that it

appeared to me that Dr. Candlish and Dr. Begg had changed places; the difference being that Dr. Candlish had been right and had gone wrong, whereas Dr. Begg had been wrong and had come right. I remember that Dr. Candlish was much amused by the statement, while Dr. Begg did not at all like it; and, indeed, it was not altogether fair to Dr. Begg, for he was at this time, just as much as he was at any time, an advocate of religious instruction. But at this time the only opponents of such instruction were such men as Mr. George Combe and Mr. James Simson; and, *as against them*, Dr. Begg had perfect confidence that the people of Scotland would insist upon religious education. But at the later period there was a large body of Christian men who, led—or misled—by Voluntaryism, held that religion should not be taught in nationally supported schools. In these altered circumstances he might very well consider that legislative intervention was more necessary than it was before.

At the same meeting of Presbytery Dr. Begg seconded a motion by Dr. Candlish to petition Parliament in opposition to a bill for instituting diplomatic relations with Rome. On this subject I may be allowed to say that while then and always the proposal was worthy of all reprobation, it is more manifestly so now. *Then* the Pope was the temporal sovereign of a considerable State, and it could be pleaded with some plausibility that it was in that capacity that he was to be regarded by the sovereigns of other States. But *now*, if he is to be recognised at all, it can be only as an ecclesiastical usurper, putting forth claims to a dominion over British subjects which no patriotic British statesman will tolerate for a moment.

At the meeting of the Presbytery in March, Dr. Begg, in a long speech, brought forward an overture on the subject of Home Missions. The proposals which he made have been substantially adopted, and have been acted upon—of course with various modifications—ever since.

At the beginning of May, Dr. Begg and others went to London, and pleaded eloquently in Exeter Hall the cause of the missions of the Free Church. Although it was probably because he was Convener of the Home Missions Committee that he was sent on this service, it is specially gratifying to me to find that his speech was in great part a pleading for Foreign Missions.

Dr. Begg took a very active part in the proceedings of the General Assembly of 1848. He gave in the Reports of the Church Building and the Home Missions Committee. The great question before this Assembly was as to the institution of a College at Aberdeen. The discussion occupied several *sederunts.* I should be sorry to revive this controversy, which was conducted with great keenness. I shall only say that, in the division, Dr. Begg voted for Dr. Candlish's motion in opposition to that of Dr. Cunningham. Dr. Cunningham's motion was carried by a majority of sixty-three, and so the Aberdeen College was not instituted by that Assembly. His long speech, in giving in the Home Mission Report, was in his happiest style. I must introduce two highly characteristic "bits:"—

"We all know what kind of a thing human nature is, particularly in regard to matters of money. If men were led to imagine that everything will be done for them, they will do comparatively little for themselves, and will quietly and contentedly rest on their neighbours; while, if the props are driven away from them, they will stand on their own feet. I remember a story told in the West of Scotland. Certain persons were at a funeral, bearing along the body of a friend. The road was hilly and long. At length one man, feeling the immense pressure, said to his friend that it was 'a great lift.' 'Lift!' said the other man, looking at him as if he had discovered a better way of it. 'Do you lift? I aye lean!'"

The other story I happen to know to have been true to the letter. The minister was my late friend, Dr. Samuel Miller of Glasgow:—

"I know with what complacency those who are stationed throughout the country can look to a committee in Edinburgh suffering under pecuniary embarrassments, whereas it is a most formidable position in which the conveners and members of these committees are placed. It always reminds me of what I have heard of a case of translation of one of our ministers. His health gave way. His doctor told him that unless he left that part of the country and went to a more healthful district, his life was in danger. Accordingly he accepted a call to another charge. His people made most strenuous opposition to his removal, and in the course of the negotiations which occurred, one of the ministers said to the people: 'Would you keep your minister in defiance of the advice of his physician, who has said that if he remains where he is he will die?' 'Well!' said an old man, 'we have considered a' that, and we hae a' made up our minds to tak' our chance o' that.'"

At the close of his speech, Dr. Begg intimated that he felt it due to the interests of his congregation that he should resign the convenership of the committee, but was urged to retain it. At a subsequent diet a compromise was effected, Dr. Begg being released from the convenership of the Committee on Buildings, and retaining that of the Home Missions Committee.

At this Assembly, Dr. Begg and his congregation were brought into unpleasant prominence in the discussion on the Sustentation Fund. An overture had been sent up, the purport of which in substance was that "supplements" should be abolished, that all the money raised for the support of the ministry should be paid into the central fund, and that from this fund alone the ministers should receive their incomes. The overture was introduced to the Assembly by two respected elders, who submitted a motion in accordance with it. On a vote being taken only 4 members voted for it, and 176 against it. But the mover, in the course of his speech, had produced a list of congregations whose congregational supplements he considered to be out

of proportion to their contributions to the Sustentation Fund. At the head of this list was the Newington congregation. Of course Dr. Begg had too much self-respect to say a word in his own vindication. But the Deacons' Court felt it incumbent on them to repel the attack which had been made on themselves and their minister. They put forth an "advertisement," which I regret that I may not reproduce at length. It contains what I think will now be universally regarded as a complete vindication of the congregation for giving, and Dr. Begg for receiving, a supplement of £300, while they contributed but £228 to the Sustentation Fund, of which their minister got back £128 as his share of the equal dividend. Their argument is substantially this, that £228 was a fair contribution for such a congregation as theirs to give to the Sustentation Fund, while £428 was not too large an income for such a minister as theirs to receive.

The conclusion of the statement is as follows:—

"The Deacons' Court think it due to their respected pastor to add, what, if this matter had not been brought before the public, they would probably never have thought of stating, that if he has been comfortably supported by his congregation, he has shown an amount of liberality in contributing to Church schemes and objects which is more than creditable to himself, and which it would be a new thing for some of his detractors to imitate. Since the Disruption the Deacons' Court have passed through their hands, of Dr. Begg's private personal contributions, various sums amounting to nearly £400; and this, of course, in addition to all the physical and mental labour which for years continuously he has undergone.

"The Deacons' Court will only add further that they have drawn up, and now publish this statement, without their pastor's cognisance. They feel much more anxious about his honour than about their own, and would not think they had discharged their duty towards him, if they had not taken some such step."

If I had been able to give the document at length, I

should not have been surprised if some readers had thought its logic in some points not altogether faultless. But I think every impartial reader would have been of opinion that upon the whole a thoroughly satisfactory case was made out. The facts brought out are simply these, that the Newington congregation were giving to the Sustentation Fund double of what they were getting from it; that they were giving their minister a supplement of £300, out of which he had, on an average of the five years since the Disruption, returned £80. No doubt the scale of incomes generally was a good deal lower then than it is now. But I do not believe there is any one who will say that Dr. Begg's income was more than sufficient for the necessities and ordinary comforts of metropolitan life. Most will, I think, be surprised that his public contributions to funds connected with the Church should have been so large; and I have means of knowing that, in addition to these contributions, he was not niggardly, though he was cautious, in giving to other objects, and through other channels.

The question as between the Sustentation Fund and Supplements is one that has again and again cropped up. And it cannot be denied that there have been, and are, a few cases in which congregations are not acting generously in giving, and ministers in receiving, supplements out of due proportion to the contribution to the Sustentation Fund; but these cases have never been many, and it is quite possible that, with respect to some of them, satisfactory explanations might be given. One thing I think is certain, that the evil cannot be cured by legislation. The Assembly might easily enough pass an Act that no supplement shall bear more than a certain proportion to the contribution of the congregation to the Sustentation Fund. This might have the effect of diminishing the supplements,—it certainly would not have the effect of increasing the equal dividend. But while I do not think that this is a matter for legislation,

I do very heartily desire an elevation of public sentiment regarding it. Reasonable supplements are essential to our well-being as a congregational Church. It is by means of the Sustentation Fund that we are able to occupy what all Free Churchmen regard as the higher and better position of a Presbyterian and National Church.

In July Dr. Begg attended the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and gave a hearty speech, in the course of which he stated briefly but clearly what he and all Free Churchmen in those days regarded as the principles of the Free Church with reference to the relation between Church and State. "They in Scotland," he said, "had not changed their principles; they had merely, and that from the force of conscience, changed their position. They held as firmly as they ever did, that it was the duty of the civil magistrate to maintain and support those who ministered in spiritual things. They held as firmly as they ever did that the division of a country into parochial districts was the most effectual way for ministering to the necessities of the people. Many were surprised, seeing the large sums of money they had raised, and seeing that they had been evicted from their manses, that they had not become Voluntaries in principle. But they denied and repudiated the idea that a nation, as such, was not bound to support the Church of Him who is the Ruler of nations. The Voluntaries said, 'We are sounder in the faith than you, but we confess you are better in the practice.' Now, in point of fact, he conceived they were sounder in the faith than the Voluntaries, for they held the whole truth. They told the *man* his duty, and they told the *civil magistrate* his duty. The Voluntaries told only the half of the truth; they did not tell the magistrate his duty. . . . They held that, according to the constitution of the kingdom, the Word of God, sound policy, and justice, the Church of Christ was entitled to support from the State. Yet they could not only

do without the magistrate's assistance, but even against it. They could go on even in the face of persecution, come from what quarter it might." It needs scarcely be said that through all his life Dr. Begg held fast by these views, and never wavered in maintaining that they are in harmony with the principles which necessitated the existence of the Free Church as an ecclesiastical organisation.

At the August Commission, the main subject under discussion was the appointment of a professor in the New College, in succession to Dr. Candlish, who had been appointed by the Assembly to the office, but who had, with most generous regard to the interests of his congregation, resigned without entering on the actual discharge of its duties. Dr. Bannerman was proposed as his successor in the chair. Dr. Begg and others, while they made no objection to Dr. Bannerman, urged delay, and carried the Commission with them. It may be stated by anticipation that Dr. Bannerman was appointed by the Assembly of next year, and discharged the duties of the chair with great credit to himself, and great benefit to the students, till his death in 1868. At this Commission, Dr. Begg gave a speech on the Site question. By this time the Bill introduced by Mr. Bouverie, as the legitimate sequel of the report of his committee, after passing the first and second reading, and passing through committee, had been rejected on the third reading, on the motion of Sir James Graham, the Home Secretary. Of course the Free Church was bitterly disappointed, and all the more because they considered that some of their own friends, notably Mr. Rutherford and Mr. Fox Maule (afterwards Lord Dalhousie) had given but a feeble and half-hearted support to Mr. Bouverie. I presume that the explanation of this was that these men were aware that the Bill, if it had passed the Commons, would certainly have been rejected by the Lords. Probably this may account for their indifference, as it seemed to many, as to its rejection by the Commons. In

point of fact, the object in view was in great measure accomplished by the discussion of the matter in Parliament, and by the expression of public opinion. One after another the site-refusers gave way, and with better or worse grace, and on terms more or less favourable, granted what they had so strenuously refused. Perhaps this was better than if they had been compelled to act under the stringency of legal enactment. Of this favourable result a very considerable share of the credit is due to Dr. Begg.

CHAPTER XXXI.

INNOVATIONS—HOME MISSIONS—HOUSES FOR THE WORKING CLASSES—AN IMPOSTOR—CHURCH PROPERTY—WASTE LANDS—BEAUTY OF EDINBURGH—CHURCH FINANCE—EMIGRATION.

Dr. Begg began the work of 1849 by taking up the ground which he maintained so long and so strenuously in opposition to innovations in public worship. On the 3d of January he introduced into the Edinburgh Presbytery a proposal to transmit to the Assembly a motion on the subject. The nature of the proposals which he made, and of the arguments by which he supported them, will be better, because more briefly, indicated by quoting the speech of Dr. Candlish in seconding the motion, than it would be by reproducing or abridging that of the mover:—

"Dr. Candlish thought that this was a subject deserving of consideration, particularly considering the temperate manner in which it had been introduced by Dr. Begg. He quite concurred with Dr. Begg in the view which he had given of the duties of public worship, and of the pernicious effects of substituting an evening diet of worship for the service in the afternoon. He also concurred with the views he had thrown out in reference to the dispensation of the Lord's Supper at tables, and also as to the exceeding impropriety of separating the preaching of the Word from the dispensation of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, even by an interval of half an hour. It was a standing, and a very sacred, principle of the Church that the efficacy of the sacraments depended upon the Word and the Spirit of God, and accordingly the Church was extremely scrupulous of dispensing any sacrament without the preaching of the Word, on the ground, certainly, that the dispensation of any sacrament without the preaching of the Word tended to the popish notion that its efficacy was

ex opere operato, depending on its mere administration. He thought that the suggestion thrown out, whether or not there should be annually required from every minister, not in the way of anything minute or inquisitorial, but of a general nature, an account of what he did in his congregation, and relating to the discharge of public duty, was of some importance. The Presbyterian Church of Ireland had something of this kind, and he thought they might learn a lesson from them. At all events, the overture introduced by Dr. Begg was really worthy of attention, and might well engage the attention of the Assembly. He would accordingly second the motion for its transmission."

The motion was unanimously agreed to.

Dr. Begg was no longer convener of the Assembly's Committee on Home Missions. But he had not lost any portion of his interest in the great subject, and was ready to turn to the best account the experience which he had gained during his tenure of that important office. At an extraordinary meeting of the Edinburgh Presbytery, held only a week after that of which I have just spoken, he proposed an overture on the "State of the Free Church in the poorer districts of large cities." His speech in support of the overture is a fine specimen of his best style of speaking, of his clear-sighted apprehension of the state of matters with which he had to deal, and of the sound practical judgment which he brought to bear upon the meeting of difficulties. I regret that I cannot afford space for the reproduction of this speech. I shall only say that if the Free Church had at that time acted more vigorously on the lines laid down by Dr. Begg, she would have done more good than she has done—and I thankfully acknowledge that she has done much—and she would have been stronger to-day than she is, although I have no sympathy with those who underestimate her actual strength. This overture also was unanimously transmitted.

In the course of the following week Dr. Begg published a "communicated" article in the *Witness*, the authorship of

which he acknowledged in a letter in the next issue, on the subject of "finding healthy and profitable employment for the poor working classes." In these communications he threw out important suggestions on the reclamation of waste lands, the preparation of peat for fuel, and—the subject which he afterwards made his great specialty—the providing of better dwellings for the working classes. When the difficult problems connected with these questions attain solution, as it is devoutly to be hoped they are destined to attain, it will not fail to be gratefully acknowledged that Dr. Begg was the great power of the movement, that he did much, and prepared the way for doing much more. He continued the treatment of the subject in a series of long and able letters. I must give space to an extract from the first of the series, premising the statement that although the terrible state of things which it describes is considerably ameliorated now—thanks mainly to the energy of my friends our Police-Surgeon, Dr. Littlejohn, and the convener of the Sanitary Committee of the Town Council, Bailie Clark[1]—yet matters are very far from being in a satisfactory condition:—

"Now, let any one go into this region and examine it, and he will see what a frightful mass it is. Let him take any close at random. I went the other day with a friend to refresh my recollection of a scene with which at one time I was more familiar. We entered a very narrow and filthy wynd; we plunged into a black opening, more like the mouth of a coalpit than the entrance to human habitations, and after forcing our way up a dark, ruinous staircase, redolent of damp pestilential vapour, we reached the uppermost flat, and opened a door. We were nearly knocked down by the horrid vapour by which we were assailed, and were glad to get a bundle of rags torn out of the broken window to secure a mouthful of fresh air. We found two mothers and a number of children inhabiting this miserable apartment, for which a shilling a week was paid. There was one bed of rotten straw in a corner for the whole inmates; and we found

[1] Now (1886) Sir Thomas Clark, Bart., Lord Provost of Edinburgh.—T. S.

that this was only one of six houses of a similar kind on the same stair-head, making the whole population of this wretched and ruinous tenement to be greater than that of a considerable country village. Besides, this was only one of a multitude of similar receptacles of filth and fever, crowded and wedged together in the same narrow and dirty lane, and that lane only one of many.

"The first idea that must have struck any one was, that there could be no wonder if crime, fever, and pauperism spread in such a locality. These human beings were in far more uncomfortable and wretched circumstances than any sensible farmer's cattle. My pigs at Liberton, luxuriating in clean straw, and breathing the pure air of heaven, were as gentlemen in comparison. No man in his senses would force his cow into such a pestilential den. And then, when disease enters such dwellings, how horrid to think of the sick and the sound huddled together! When death cuts off a member of the family, how dreadful to think of all the rest forced to eat and sleep beside the dead body! We drag a dead horse out of the stable of the living; but here such a separation is impossible. How can we wonder that human nature, in such circumstances, is found at the lowest point of degradation, defying ordinary means of cure, and spreading moral as well as physical evil like a pestilence?"

In the sanatory and economic well-being of the people, Dr. Begg had long taken a lively—and, it needs not be said, an intelligent—interest; and both in Paisley and in Liberton he had exerted himself for the improvement of the dwellings of working people. But from the time which we have now reached he became the leader of the movement. His letters were followed up by a public meeting held in his church "in favour of the proposal to throw open the Eastern Meadows, free of charge, to the poor and working classes." Many a time I have heard him refer with exultation to the part which he took in this movement, and more than once when we happened to cross the Mound together, he informed me that it was to him that the people of Edinburgh were indebted for free access to the East Princes Street Gardens,

one of the finest parks in the country. Subsequently he took as deep an interest in the opening of the West Gardens, and although I do not think that he took so prominent a part in the latter movement as in the former, yet as the latter was simply the rolling on of the ball which he had set in motion in the former, it was with pride quite justifiable that he used to say, "'Twas I that did it." In advocating reforms of this class, Dr. Begg was always singularly moderate. The economical argument was always of greater moment with him than it is with many projectors. He might be wrong in thinking that a particular scheme would "pay;" but this was always an element in the considerations which led him to a decision.

On the 1st of March of this year a great public meeting was held in Glasgow regarding the *Quoad sacra* churches. A decision had been given by the House of Lords in a test case. That decision was in favour of the Established Church, and I suppose that it was in accordance with the letter of the law. The question was now as to the course of action to be adopted by the members of these churches, the great majority of whom were now Free Churchmen. The main resolution was moved by Dr. Begg, and supported in a long and eloquent speech. It is not necessary to refer to his arguments now. I content myself with quoting a new story, introduced now, I think, for the first time. After quoting Mr. Oliphant of Dumbarton's saying, that no one is entitled to pronounce on a man's character until he has had money transactions with him, he added the following: "I have likewise heard an account which an American gave of a brother American. He was a man of loud profession, with the hands of Esau and the voice of Jacob, and when the other was asked his opinion of him he said, 'Godwards, the man has a good profession; but, manwards, he is very twistical.'"

At the March Commission, Dr. Begg brought up the subject

of Church titles. The Church will probably never know the extent to which they are indebted to him for the peace with which our congregations have, for these forty years, sat each under its own vine and fig-tree. It is mainly due to his urgency and persistency that of litigation respecting Free Church property there has been none. What was done by Dr. Begg might of course have been done by some one else. But in point of fact it was he mainly that did it; and the result has shown that it was well done. On this occasion he was highly complimented by the man whose approbation in such a department was of more value than that of any other man, Mr. Murray Dunlop, who said that "he could not too strongly express his sense of the importance of the object brought before them by Dr. Begg, and his desire that they should adopt the suggestions which he had thrown out." At the same meeting of Commission he spoke powerfully on the subject of Sabbath observance and railway travelling.

With all his shrewdness and caution, and all his knowledge of human nature, Dr. Begg was not infallible. Like the rest of us he had to learn much by experience, and that experience was, in a case that I have now to mention, of a specially painful kind. An episode in his life, not of great importance otherwise than on account of the great influence which it exerted over his habits and judgments, I must relate with some detail; and I shall best do so by relating it continuously, and then returning to chronological order in my narrative.

About this time there came to Edinburgh a Mr. Peter MacMenamy. He called himself the Rev. P. MacMenamy, and Dr. MacMenamy, but probably both titles were apocryphal. He fully answered the American's description of having a good profession Godwards; but it is far too mild a statement of the matter to say that he was very "twistical" manwards. That term fitly describes a character unhappily too common, in which it were uncharitable to decide that

the religious profession is necessarily hypocritical, and that the moral "twist" is the result of deliberate and conscious dishonesty. But the largest charity cannot include MacMenamy in this class. Of his previous history I have no knowledge. I understand that he represented that he was a converted Romanist priest, and it is not unlikely that he had been admitted to some one of the inferior orders. He seems to have come to Edinburgh as a private adventurer, and to have conducted his operations on a small scale, and in an unostentatious way, holding his meetings in a private house. But ere long he took more prominent ground, and did unquestionably create a considerable sensation in Edinburgh, both among Romanists and Protestants. He became a member of Dr. Begg's church, and was elected to the eldership there. The Free Church Presbytery undertook the supervision of the "Irish Mission," and was greatly interested in its apparent success. Public discussions were held. Some of the disputants poured out bitter abuse on MacMenamy, but most of them acknowledged themselves beaten in argument and convinced of the truth of Protestantism. The operations were of course conducted at considerable expense, and funds were liberally contributed. But ere long public confidence was shaken, and the Presbytery, without bringing any formal charge against MacMenamy, declined any further responsibility for his mission. A non-denominational committee was formed, of which Dr. Begg was a leading member. Ere long it appeared that the expenditure had not been duly checked, and that a considerable debt had been incurred. Still it was not supposed that MacMenamy was chargeable with aught worse than an excess of Irish generosity, and an ignorance of secular affairs, and a lack of business habits. But an inquiry behoved to be made, and the conduct of that inquiry happily devolved upon one who had at once the conscientiousness and the ability to make it thorough. It was in the course of this investigation that the real character

of the work appeared. One of MacMenamy's chief agents made a clean breast of it, acknowledging that the major part of the disputants and the converts were men of straw, paid and dressed to perform their several parts in the scene. Of course these statements were strenuously denied, and it is possible that they were not true to the full extent. But enough of them were substantiated to make it manifest that MacMenamy was an impostor, and the committee dismissed him from their service. Dr. Begg stood by him to the last, and incurred much obloquy for what was designated as his attempt to screen one whom he must have known to be a thorough scoundrel. Now, he *was* a thorough scoundrel, and Dr. Begg *did* endeavour to screen him. But he did *not* know his character, and was slower than other men to be convinced of the extent to which he and they had been deceived. That he would be slower than most men to be brought to such a conviction every one who knew him would have expected, and this expectation would have been founded partly on the excellence, and partly on the defects, of his mental constitution. MacMenamy's subsequent history was of the saddest kind. He left Edinburgh, leaving his wife wholly unprovided for; he was convicted in Liverpool of creating a disturbance in a brothel, and he is believed to have been burnt to death, having set fire to his bed while drunk.

The effect of this miserable affair on Dr. Begg's mind was deep and enduring. It did not lessen his zeal against Romanism; but it made him excessively suspicious of supposed converts from Romanism. Long afterwards he and I had to do with a case in which his suspicions proved to be well-founded. But there were other cases in which they led him to stand aloof from, or to place but a restricted confidence in, men raised up by God to do a good work. We should not think the worse of Luther, because MacMenamy was a rogue. It is not certainly an original remark, but it is

a true one, that one of the worst effects of roguery is, that it makes us suspicious even of honest men. It is an old Scottish proverb that "burnt bairns dreed the fire." Dr. Begg had been very sorely burnt, and his dread was in proportion.

Early in the year 1849 Dr. Begg embodied in a pamphlet[1] the views which he had long held, and which he had expressed again and again, on the subject of Pauperism and Poor-Laws. In this pamphlet he broaches various questions respecting entail and the easy transference of land. His views were then deemed radical and almost revolutionary. But they are now accepted by the leading politicians of all parties. Without undervaluing the importance of emigration as a means of lessening a superabundant population, he ever regarded it as the great matter to be aimed at—and aim at it he did most zealously—to provide remunerative employment for a larger number of people; and he did not consider that we had really any excess of population, provided only that facilities were afforded for their employment in providing food and clothing for themselves, and so increasing the national wealth and well-being. The following sentence in one of his letters to the *Witness* seems very happy:—"The earth is, by the kindness of the adorable Jehovah, a vast and inexhaustible magazine of human food. But that food must be extracted by persevering toil. 'For every mouth sent into this world there are two hands,' and there are millions of uncultivated acres. Adam might have spoken, as some of our wiseacres do, not indeed of emigrating to a different country, but to a different planet, because this whole earth was waste; or of lying down to die, because he had no neighbour to feed his family. But such sophistry was obviously rebuked alike by common sense and the impulse of hunger." As to the reclaimability of a great amount of waste

[1] "Pauperism and the Poor-Laws; or, Our sinking population and rapidly increasing burdens practically considered." By James Begg, D.D. Edinburgh and London, 1849.

land all over our country I presume there can be no doubt. Nor can there be as to the ability of the reclaimed lands to produce crops. But, admitting fully that my opinion on the matter is of extremely little value, I may be allowed to suggest that there appear to me to be two questions having a very important bearing on the matter, of which Dr. Begg has not taken account. Have we a climate, either in our high-lying or in our low mossy districts, that in ordinary seasons would ripen the crops which the land might be made to produce? And can we produce crops that will enable us to cope with foreign competition in the market? I have no doubt that the draining and cultivation of mosses, and the judicious planting of trees, would eventually improve the climate. But this is a slow process, and can scarcely be an element in the consideration of the urgent practical question. The constantly increasing importation seems to be decisive against the attempt at grain culture on such lands. The continually increasing amount of pauperism was one that ever weighed on Dr. Begg's spirits. It was then sufficiently alarming. It is simply appalling now. With a depression of trade unprecedented in respect of extent and duration, with our farmers on the brink of bankruptcy, with the assurance that this can be averted only by the reduction of the incomes of our landed proprietors by a half, the boldest may well hold his breath, and others besides the most pious may cry, "Help, Lord! for vain is the help of man."

In the Assembly of 1849 Dr. Begg took a leading part in the discussion of the ordinary business, which was at that time more important than at an earlier time,—when great movements were in progress, and when it was felt that no great harm would ensue from the occurrence of mistakes which could be rectified afterwards—or at a later time, when the great machine had been brought into smooth working order. As convener of the Buildings Committee he gave in a weighty report, and enforced it by a weighty speech, on the

evils of debt, the importance of indisputable titles, and other kindred subjects. During the summer he seems to have been mainly occupied in efforts to prevent the desecration of the Sabbath, and in efforts for improving the dwellings and elevating the character of the poor. He ever maintained that these two must go together, that there can be no morality without decent dwellings. I often, while fully admitting the intimate connection betwixt the two, expressed to him a doubt of the rectitude of the order in which he placed them. We both advocated high morality and comfortable dwellings; but he was more disposed to advocate the latter in order to the attainment of the former; I the former, as a main means towards the attainment of the latter. On one point he erred from defective knowledge. He constantly reiterated the statement that houses of single apartments are utterly incompatible with delicacy or even decency. Now, this is perfectly true with respect to people with our habits. It is not a subject for public discussion; but I must say that in the course of much intercourse with our virtuous poor, I was often led to admire their instinctive and unconscious modification of habits which might seem to us unalterable, in order to their adaptation to different circumstances. As to Sabbath observance, Dr. Begg very distinctly apprehended the connection which, in such a country as this, must necessarily subsist betwixt the various classes of the people, and their various employments. In particular, he seems to have laid hold upon the propagating power of Sabbath desecration by its enforcement or tolerance in the Post-office. This is by far the most extensive department of work for which the nation as such is responsible, and it is greatly to be lamented that it should be the great centre of Sabbath desecration.

The question ought to be settled on the principle of simply regarding the Sabbath hours as non-existent as hours of business; as they are reckoned in our factories and our workshops, our courts of law and our public offices, our

shops and other places of business. Perhaps I may be disposed to estimate more highly than Dr. Begg would have done the difficulties of the arrangements that would have to be made, and the inconveniences that might arise during a transition period. But it were purely ridiculous to suppose that with the marvellous organisation of our magnificent postal system, these arrangements could not be satisfactorily made, or that the inconveniences would not soon cease to be felt.

Besides continuing his series of letters in the *Witness*, Dr. Begg published an important pamphlet,[1] in the form of a letter to Lord Cockburn. In this he fought manfully for the restoration to the people of their rights, to the free use of all those appliances which are fitted to make Edinburgh not only—as it is—one of the most beautiful, but also one of the healthiest and happiest cities in the world. Lord Cockburn had advocated, on purely æsthetic grounds, the conservation of all that was picturesque, and in any sense beautiful in our Old Town. Dr. Begg urged improvement along with conservation, utility along with beauty. "It is a cruel mockery," he says, "to speak to the torpid and festering masses of the beauties of Edinburgh! Taste! Poor creatures,—you may almost as well speak to the cattle in the stall.

> "Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates, and men decay."

"And in proportion as they are allowed to sink—and by the cramming and wedging of them they are sinking daily—the idea of public taste becomes more and more visionary. The splendid banks and other buildings lately erected in the New Town, which your Lordship justly commends, are only a melancholy contrast to the deepening sin and degradation

[1] "How to Promote and Preserve the True Beauty of Edinburgh: Being a few hints to the Hon. Lord Cockburn on his late letter to the Lord Provost. Edinburgh, 1849."

of the poorer districts of the city. What we want is a clearing out of the dens of filth, and better houses for the poor. And, if your Lordship desires to aid in bringing about a better state of things in the city generally, you must seek, by all physical and Christian means, to elevate the body of the people. Forgive me, above all, for reminding your Lordship that nothing will elevate them effectually, and purify their taste, but the Gospel of Christ. 'Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.'" This short extract suggests many reflections relating to the state of things actually existing, and existing not in Edinburgh alone, but all over the country, and in other countries too. The enormous increase of wealth, and the enormous increase of poverty, the ever-widening separation between the different classes of our people, the want of sympathy at all times, and the occasional outbreaks of positive antipathy between labourers and employers of labour;—all these, and many associated or consequent evils, cannot but press heavily on every thoughtful mind, and suggest the question, what is it all to lead to? One thing is certain, that the Gospel of Christ is the only adequate remedy for the existing evils, the only reliable safeguard against their indefinite increase. It was because this spiritual salt "lost its savour" that the evil originated; it is by the vigorous application of this remedy that the corruption is to be stayed. Something—thanks be to God—has been done; but much more remains to be done. It is, of course, impossible to estimate precisely the amount of progress made in any work of reformation. It were a great matter if the increase of the evil were stayed; and this is perhaps the point that we have reached, though I am by no means sure that even this is so.

It was at the meeting of the Free Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, October 1849, that the difference between Dr. Begg and Dr. Candlish, on the subject of the religious

element in national education, came prominently out, regarding which I quoted in a preceding page a statement which I made long afterwards, to the effect that they had simply changed sides. There was no difference between them as to the insistance that national education should be religious. The only question was as to the way in which this could be done without incurring the opposition of the Voluntaries. Dr. Begg thought that by leaving the matter outside of legislation altogether, the consent and co-operation of Christian Voluntaries would be secured. Dr. Candlish did not trust to this, but would have the religious element secured by statute. So far, it is true, these great and good men did afterwards change sides. But the change was due, not to any alteration of the views of either of them with respect to the importance and the necessity of the religious element in education, but in the one case to the more pronounced attitude which the Voluntaries afterwards assumed, and in the other to a desire to get the best system obtainable—the less of two evils.

At a meeting of the Edinburgh Presbytery in November, Dr. Begg introduced an important overture respecting the finances of the Church. It asked the General Assembly "seriously to consider the existing financial arrangements of the Church with a view of resolving:—1. In regard to the principles which should guide the Church on the subject of multiplying or continuing weak charges, especially in thinly-peopled districts. 2. In regard to the number of public collections that should be appointed by the Assembly for any one year. 3. In regard to the best way by which congregations and committees that are in debt may be effectually rescued and kept from it, and by which voluntary donations and bequests may be secured for churches, especially in the poorer localities of large cities."

In advocating the transmission of this overture, Dr. Begg made a singularly effective speech, the gist of which is

summarily comprehended in the following pithy sentence:—"There was no metaphysics in money; and it was quite certain that the rules by which all financial affairs ought to be guided were just as unchangeable as those which regulated the planetary system, and that, unless the Church conformed itself in its proceedings to those rules, it might prepare for a speedy overthrow, however well its affairs might be guided in other matters." All the three questions referred to in this overture are still matters of present interest. They cannot be settled by legislation in general terms or on general principles. As to the second of them—the number of collections ordered by the Assembly to be made in all our congregations—it happens that I have been frequently convener of a committee which is appointed annually by the General Assembly to "frame an act anent collections." Every year there has been an honest and earnest desire on the part of the committee and its convener that the number of collections should be lessened. But every year representations are made to them by the conveners of the several missionary committees, each one declaring on behalf of his own committee that it *must* have a collection. Still, through the completion of some of the objects it has been found possible to diminish the number to a certain extent; and I think it may be stated that there is no likelihood of a greater number than *six* collections being ordered in any future year; and I am confident that our people will very heartily contribute according to their means to extraordinary collections at average intervals of two months. This is, of course, over and above the monthly contributions in all the congregations to the Sustentation Fund, and the quarterly contributions in a large proportion of them to the Foreign Missions Fund.

At the meeting of the Commission in November, Dr. Begg made a strong but temperate statement on the subject of "Highland Evictions and Emigration." On this subject he was of one mind from first to last. No man ever held more

decided views as to rights of property, but none had clearer convictions as to the responsibilities attaching to proprietorship. While he was ready to recommend spontaneous emigration, as in many cases conducive to the well-being of the people, and while he ever took a deep interest in emigrants to the colonies and to other lands, he never ceased to protest against the notion that proprietors of lands should have it in their power to deprive their tenants of their holdings, and so to make emigration practically compulsory. In the speech before me, he refers to this as "the exercise of that which is the highest criminal function of the State next to execution—the power of banishing people to any extent they pleased."

CHAPTER XXXII.

A CHARTER WITH EIGHT POINTS—HOUSE ACCOMMODATION IN TOWN AND COUNTRY—CRIME AND PAUPERISM—HOME RULE—NATIONAL EDUCATION—ABERDEEN COLLEGE—PROVINCE OF CHURCH COURTS—CHURCH ACCOMMODATION—PAPAL AGGRESSION—CULTIVATION OF WASTE LANDS.

It is very remarkable to what an extent Dr. Begg anticipated the feeling which now prevails on the subject of sanatory and social, and distinctively Scottish questions. There is not one of these questions on which he did not expatiate long before almost any one else had turned his mind to it. On a multitude of them he expressed his mind in a lecture which he delivered in a United Presbyterian Church in Edinburgh on the 10th of January 1850. Referring to the "Charter" and its "five points," he stated that *his* charter contained seven or eight points. Some of them he merely indicated; others he expounded at some length. These points, although they are not very definitely stated in the report before me, appear to be the following:—1. Education, improvement of its quantity and quality. 2. Suppression of drunkenness. 3. Better dwellings for working people and the poor. 4. Public washing-houses and bleaching-greens. 5. Reform of the land-laws. 6. Simplification of the transference of land. 7. Treatment of crime and pauperism. 8. Greater justice to Scotland in Parliament. On all these points he was distinctly a leader of public opinion, to the extent that he strongly advocated reforms which a few deemed desirable, and fewer thought to be attainable! while now some have been happily attained, and all men believe

that the rest are to follow. "Next to the spread of the Gospel itself," he said, "he would put in the very front of the reformation which he proposed for the elevation of the working-classes, a universal system of education. He was convinced that ignorance and degradation would always be found to go hand in hand." He suggested the application of the Hospital property, in Edinburgh and elsewhere, to the effecting of this end, and so gave what was, so far as I know, the first hint for the appropriation of a large portion of the funds of Heriot's Hospital to the foundation and support of free schools, a proposal for whose successful accomplishment we owe a debt of gratitude to the late Mr. Duncan M'Laren. On the subject of drunkenness he only touched, but referred with hearty recognition to "the marked change in this respect which had been produced in America by the efforts of Temperance Societies, upon both the temporal comforts of the people themselves and the aspect of the country." On dwellings for the working-classes and the poor his utterances were, as ever, most emphatic. "The reverend doctor forcibly illustrated the evils which were produced by the want of proper houses for the working-classes in large cities, and also in agricultural districts, particularly referring, as respected the latter, to the evils of the bothy system. He also said that, not only on grounds of humanity, but also of self-interest, society had a deep stake in the question, both of promoting sanatory reform and providing better houses for the poorer working-classes, seeing that disease was generated by crowding people together, as was the case at present, and that they had to support the children of those who were cut off. The stables of farmers were well ventilated, partly because, if a horse died, £30 or £40 required immediately to be paid for a new one. Every male head of a family cut off by fever cost the community, in poor-rates, at an average, £50; if the money were required to be paid next day." I hope it may not look like heartlessness if I

stop here to point to this as illustrative of what I have had occasion to notice more than once before,—Dr. Begg's correct grasp of the great features of a subject, and his comparative inability to perceive minuter elements. The argument here would be valid, if the effect of overcrowding were to kill a person otherwise immortal, and had no tendency to shorten the lives of his children. In point of fact, the actual cost entailed on the community is not the whole £50, but only a sum bearing the like proportion to the £50 that the man's life, as curtailed, bears to the term of his life under more favourable circumstances; and even that were lessened in many cases by the fact, that the same causes which shortened the life of the father had lessened the number of those to be provided for. The evil is great and sad; but Dr. Begg does not state it quite accurately. His intentions were always good, and he always stated the truth as he apprehended it. These apprehensions were almost invariably correct in the main, but not always in the details. But to return. I shall have occasion ere long to dwell on his efforts to improve the domestic circumstances both of our city and rural populations. As to public washing-houses, I suppose them to be a necessary evil. It is probably impossible to provide houses for all our people such that arrangements can be made in them for washing and drying clothes properly; and it is probable that recourse must be had to combination; and that combination must be aided either by the municipal authorities or by societies. Thus I suppose that public washing-houses are necessary. But still they are an evil. It is not good for the wife of a working-man to be obliged to leave her home for several hours at a time, and to be almost compelled to take part in the gossip of an indiscriminately admitted crowd. I can testify that the better class of the women for whom these houses are designed, as well as their husbands, while they acknowledge the vast superiority of the appliances which are provided over aught that is

possible in their own houses, do not look upon them with unmingled favour. I think most of us will regard their dislike as not causeless or unreasonable; but I am not aware that any better method of supplying a great want has been devised.

The question of the land-laws is far too extensive for me to be able to treat it here, and far too difficult and complicated for me to be able to treat it at all. It is certainly an extremely undesirable thing that the soil of the country should be owned by a few men; but it is difficult to see how this can be prevented by legislation. Nor am I sure that the effect of the abolition of the privileges of primogeniture and of entail would generally be the breaking-up of overgrown estates. Would it not in many cases be rather their transference from the old feudal families to *millionaires?* And then such subdivision as might be effected would probably not be an unmixed good. A working peasant proprietary is one thing; a body of proprietors too rich to work and too poor to expend capital on the improvement of their land and the comfort of their tenants, is quite a different thing. But the subject, I repeat, lies altogether outside my sphere, and I should not be justified in saying anything about it, but that it is brought before me by Dr. Begg. In advocating, as he strenuously did for many years, the simplification of the process for the transference of property in land, Dr. Begg had evidently in view mainly the facilitation of the transference of small portions, as crofts or sites for houses. I think there can be no doubt that this were a desirable reform, and I do not see that it needs be very difficult to effect it. The treatment of crime and pauperism was a subject on which Dr. Begg thought much, and spoke and wrote much, for many years. It is unfortunate that the dealing with the two classes should have so many elements in common as to occasion their being treated together. The unhappy result is—and it is a very unhappy one—that the idea is encouraged, which many in such a community as ours

are too prone to entertain, that a certain measure of criminality attaches to poverty. Few men were able to handle these subjects better than was Dr. Begg, avoiding at once the Scylla of sentimentalism and the Charybdis of severity. His invariable prescription in the treatment of all who through crime or poverty are thrown on public support was *work;* hard and continuous work for the criminal, work suited to the age and powers of the poor. He probably overestimated the extent to which, in either case, the work could be made remunerative; but unquestionably the principle was sound. Dr. Begg was always a strenuous advocate of "Scottish rights." Many a time I have heard him laughingly say, that while he was no Parnellite, he was to a very large extent a Home Ruler, and he was either the first, or one of the earliest, to agitate for the appointment of a special Minister for Scotland. I must transcribe a passage relating to this from the lecture under review:—

"This, he said, led him to notice another point; and that was, that the state of Scotland would never be materially improved until some better plan was fallen upon by which to govern it. At this moment Scotland was treated not merely as a petty province, but just as if it were an additional county of England; and yet every man who had studied history, or who could study human nature, must see that no three kingdoms could be more different from each other than Scotland, England, and Ireland. They were united most happily together in one sense; but still, the kind of legislation applicable to the several countries must, to a large extent, be different. Scotland had only fifty-three members in the House of Commons; and her affairs were taken up there always after twelve o'clock at night as a general rule; they were taken up when most of the members had gone away to bed, as if matters relating to Scotland were not worthy of a moment's serious consideration. Besides this, Scotland had only one public responsible functionary, he meant the Lord Advocate. Now it must be borne in mind that he was not referring to any particular individual at present; he was speaking of the system which existed. And who was the

Lord Advocate, generally if not always? Why, an eminent individual, who, in addition to having the whole government upon his shoulders, had a large private business to attend to; and who, over and above, had the whole responsibility resting upon him of public prosecutor for the kingdom. In short, they had the fag-end of a single man's time, and the fag-end of the time of the Parliament of England, after the members had gone to bed, as the only separate government of the country. . . . Did it not simply mean that the people of Scotland were to sit down and allow themselves to be dealt with, in the most important affairs, as irresponsible bodies of individuals of all kinds[1] pleased; that they were to allow themselves to be fleeced to any extent, by crude and foolish systems, with their eyes open, or with them shut, as they chose; and, at all events, that they were not to exercise their own understandings in regard to the measures which were necessary for their own government. Now, he would go to the very opposite proposal. Scotland must take up her own questions, and bring her own intellect to bear on them. He thought that, at the very least, they ought to get that justice in Scotland which was dealt out to every colony of the British empire. When he was travelling in those petty dependencies of the British empire—Nova Scotia and New Brunswick—he found that they had their own parliament and their own government, and when he came back to Scotland and found that it was merely treated to the fag-end of the legislation of England, and that too at a time when great and urgent questions were rising up—questions to which the attention of the most practical and best-informed local minds ought to be turned—when he thought of this he felt indignant, and though he might be regarded as officious he would speak his mind, and he would say that Scotland——[2] John Newton did not care whether he or his wife drove the gig when there was no danger. They had, however, reached times which required very wise and careful statesmanship; and if no attention were to be paid to their affairs,—if a Secretary of State were not appointed for Scotland, with a Council of Scotsmen,—if some effectual plan were not fallen

[1] The reference is to such bodies as the Poor-Law Board, the Prison Board, &c.—T. S.

[2] The reporter states that the remainder of the sentence was lost in vehement cheering.—T. S.

upon, he was not sure but they must endeavour to get such a change in the existing system as would secure them some legislative body in their own country to dispose of purely Scottish questions."

It is to be remembered that this was spoken in 1850. I am sure that Dr. Begg never seriously contemplated such a "repeal of the Union" as would be involved in the institution of a separate Scottish parliament, although he does seem to hint at that as a last resort. I may say that he was still able to take interest in public affairs when it came to be the general expectation that Lord Rosebery—of whom he often expressed great admiration—was to become Secretary of State for Scotland, and he augured great good from the appointment. He would have hailed with delight the actual appointment of the Duke of Richmond to the office, and the other appointments which have since taken place.

At the meeting of the Presbytery of Edinburgh in January, Dr. Begg proposed the transmission to the General Assembly of an overture on the subject of national education. In the course of the discussion which ensued the divergence between his views and those of Dr. Candlish, to which I have more than once referred already, and to which I shall have to refer again, came into greater prominence than ever before, Dr. Candlish moving that the overture be not transmitted. Of course there were many points of agreement between the two. They both desired a national system. They both desird that that system should be religious; they agreed in reprobating any system which should exclude religious instruction from the schools at any hour of the day. But Dr. Begg held that the introduction and regulation of the religious instruction might be safely left in the hands of local boards, believing that they would uniformly insist on its introduction. Dr. Candlish, on the other hand, "believed that the brethren to whom he referred [1] were most anxious to get over this difficulty, and to go along with brethren of the

[1] The Voluntaries.—T. S.

Free Church in securing a national system of education which would practically involve the introduction of religion according to the Bible and the Shorter Catechism. But he could not shut his eyes to this, that after a little perhaps the more perspicacious and more clear-headed among them might come to see that the system must be worked according to their Voluntaryism—that it must be worked in the way of their making an effort, at least in the local boards, to raise the question, and to get it settled in their favour. Anticipating that, he could not, of course, have the same confidence that he otherwise might have in the local board making a right arrangement in regard to the religious instruction; for the real and pinching difficulty that was felt by a Voluntary was when he lent his hand and gave his consent to religious teaching of any sort that was to be paid for by public money raised by assessment, and he trusted that in saying this he was not imputing anything offensive to his Voluntary brethren." Dr. Candlish's motion was carried against Dr. Begg's by a majority of two to one (26–13). I have already said that a statement which I once made to the effect that Dr. Candlish and Dr. Begg subsequently changed sides on the question was not strictly accurate; but I must express my opinion that at this time Dr. Candlish was right and Dr. Begg was wrong. It is quite true that many conscientious Voluntaries acquiesce in the teaching of religion according to "use and wont" in rate-supported schools, and I rejoice on their account and the country's that it is so. But I doubt whether such acquiescence can be permanent. Their principles and their actings must in time be brought into harmony. Would that their actings might prevail to the modification of their views, rather than their views to the reversal of their actings! And I am not without hope that in many cases it will be so. Meantime I am very glad that the action of so many good men is better than their opinions;—a not unusual case.

The controversy on the subject of national education was carried on long and strenuously. The powerful pen of Hugh Miller was employed for many weeks in succession on Dr. Begg's side of the question, and there was a thorough exhibition of the *perfervidum ingenium*, which, though those who suffer at its hands may affect to sneer at it, has on innumerable occasions prevented evil and effected good. A public meeting was held on the subject on the 9th of April. At this meeting the chairman, the greater number of the speakers, and I presume of the audience, were Voluntaries. But the Free Church was represented, among the speakers, by Sheriff Crawford (afterwards Lord Ardmillan), Dr. Purves of Jedburgh, and Dr. Begg; a striking letter was also read from Dr. Guthrie, who was unable to be present at the meeting. It was a delicate position for our friend to occupy. He was quite as much opposed to Voluntaryism as he had been in the old Paisley days. But now he had the Voluntaries as his supporters, and a great number of anti-Voluntaries as his opponents. On one point he was thoroughly at one with his Voluntary friends. It was not merely by admission, but by strong conviction, that he was led to advocate the dissociation of the parochial schools from the Established Church. Not one of them was more resolute than he was in demanding this. But it was as a concession to them that he advocated the abstention of the State from prescribing religious instruction in public schools; and this advocacy was on the ground that the interests of religious education were safe in the hands of the people of Scotland, acting through local boards. Altogether, his speech on this occasion is a fair specimen of his powers as a controversialist. It contains some very happy hits. The two following may be taken as samples: "It was said during the late conversation,[1] by a noble duke, that because the people of Scotland nearly all held the same general principles, there was no reason why their children

[1] In the House of Lords.—T. S.

might not attend the same parish school. But he would turn the same fact into a different argument, and say there was no reason why all well qualified Scotchmen should not be equally admitted to the office of teacher." "Some said, with perfect scorn, 'Do you think we would commit such a matter to parents?' They commit! What presumption! It had been committed already to them by God Himself, and it was the height of presumption to employ such language."

In the General Assembly Dr. Begg's first business was to present the report of the Buildings Committee. His speech on this occasion, though dealing only with matters pertaining to the "outward service of the house of God," was very masterly and very interesting, and called forth a hearty tribute from his lifelong friend and mine, Dr. Nixon of Montrose:—

"Mr. Nixon moved the adoption of the report, and in doing so highly eulogised Dr. Begg's qualifications in dealing with subjects like the present. He thought they should be thankful to God for the diversity of gifts which He had bestowed on His servants in the Church, where they had high and sanctified abilities for all kinds of work."

At this Assembly the question as to the institution of the College at Aberdeen was keenly debated. Dr. Begg continued to oppose Dr. Cunningham and the College Committee, and made a motion, which he supported in a long speech, in favour of College Extension. It were out of place, or rather out of time, to enter upon this painful controversy now. I shall content myself, as on other occasions, with presenting a few racy "bits" from Dr. Begg's speech. "The discussion of this question on abstract grounds had been strongly deprecated by his two friends who had preceded him; than whom, he would say with all respect, two individuals more abstract in their tendencies did not exist in the world. . . . He could conceive why they should not discuss the abstract question, provided the practical matters were allowed to stand unaf-

fected; but it made all the difference possible when it was proposed to divest the provincial college of half its practical utility. A man encroaches on my field, I tell him he has no right to do so. 'Oh,' says he, 'let us adjourn the abstract question; meantime, let me plant my hedge.'" "They were all at one as to having a high standard of education for their students. They would go into no measure which would lower that standard. And especially at the present moment it was important highly to cultivate the gifts of the young men training for the ministry, in order to fit them for resisting the encroachments of infidelity and scepticism. But still, while in the training and furnishing of young men for the ministry these qualifications were necessary—talent, piety, and learning—it had to be borne in mind that, of these, two are divine gifts, and only one of them can be learned by any curriculum, however perfect." "All experience proves that it is highly inexpedient to change the established current of habit, except a principle be in the way. And all experience proves that men trained for the ministry in the South will never cordially enter upon their ministry in the North. A man who has been eight years at his college studies in the South has a strong tendency not to return to the North, if he came from it. He maintained that if they brought up the whole of the students to Edinburgh, it would be extremely difficult to get ministers to go to the North. Why is it that other churches, which have only one Divinity Hall, cannot penetrate into the North, but for the want of the influence of Divinity Halls in training young men for the ministry there? It had been remarked that the tendency of the Scotch was to go southward, and he saw that, among themselves, when a minister was asked to remove from the North to the South, he very readily did so; but when asked to remove from the South to the North it was very different. The fact was undoubted that if you wish to have a minister in the North, you must train that minister in the North."

It would neither be right, nor in the slightest degree in accordance with my wish, to revive this old controversy. I have only given a few sentences as characteristic specimens of Dr. Begg's manner of conducting a controversy. But I ought to state two things—*first*, that we do not find that attendance at our Southern colleges disqualifies or indisposes our Highland students for the exercise of their ministry in the Highlands; and *secondly*, that at a later period Dr. Begg would have given a different account of the failure of the United Presbyterians—for it was, of course, to them that he specially referred in the last of the passages which I have quoted—to penetrate into the North, than the fact of their having no Northern college. Rather he would have said conversely that they had not provided the supply because they had not the demand; not that they had not penetrated into the North because they had no college in the North, but that they had no college in the North because they had not penetrated into the North. After a long debate, Dr. Cunningham's motion was carried against Dr. Begg's by a majority of 103 (195–92).

By a much larger majority Dr. Begg was defeated in a vote between resolutions proposed by Dr. Wilson of Dundee, and by him respectively, on the subject of National Education. There was not in reality any very material difference in the sets of resolutions embodied in the two motions.

While I have again and again said that there was not subsequently an absolute change of sides on this question, it must be admitted that Dr. Begg's resolutions were more than Dr. Wilson's in the direction of the course which Dr. Wilson, and others who supported him in 1850, afterwards followed, and Dr. Begg opposed. This controversy is also dead, and needs not be revived until we come to chronicle its closing scene. I shall therefore content myself with the introduction of an eloquent passage of a general character on the subject

of the proper relation of Church courts to the moral and social questions of the day:—

"While I cordially say that everything pertaining to the mere partizan or politician ought always to be banished from the courts of this Church, the social condition and the physical circumstances of the people are matters with which we have much to do; and I believe that this great question of education has a most important bearing on the temporal welfare of the people, as well as on those higher objects at which we are bound to aim as ministers of Christ. If we look back to the past worthies of our Church, we will find that they were unacquainted with such subtleties. I see in George Buchanan, who was one of the founders of Presbyterianism, a sample of the highest class of scholarship, and one of the noblest expounders of the liberties of states. I see Knox, one of the greatest statesmen and legislators, as well as one of the most energetic champions of the Reformation. I see Alexander Henderson, a man who, coming forth from his rural retreat, was often closeted with nobles, at once guiding the counsels of faltering statesmen, pressing on the cause of truth, and the stern opponent of a corrupt Church. I see Samuel Rutherford, who exhibited in his writings the highest sublimity of spiritual development, and yet in his *Lex Rex* devotes his high talents to the more temporal work of anxiously limiting the power of kings. I see Carstares, who associated with William to staunch the flow of Scottish blood and promote the glorious Revolution. I see Dr. MacGill of Glasgow, with his many schemes of benevolence; Duncan of Ruthwell, with his savings' banks; Dr. Chalmers, with all his various plans of a temporal and a spiritual kind. I see all these distinguished men, whose successors we profess to be, dealing with great social as well as purely spiritual questions, and endeavouring, especially by vigorous applications to Government, to scare away that ignorance which is an evil in itself and the great parent of evil. I see these men, great as ministers of Christ, and at the same time prominent in promoting every object by which the temporal prosperity of the people may be advanced; and when I see our poor country trodden under the foot of long-established tyranny—a tyranny whose great foundation is the popular ignorance;—when I see the very passes of our noble moun-

tains interdicted;—when I see bits of poor soil refused as sites on which to erect buildings for the service of God;—when I see a growing crime and a crushing pauperism lying like an incubus upon the best energies of our people, and growing with that which feeds it;—when I see our country at the same time waking from the sleep of ages, and coming forth—I speak with all reverence—like Him who burst from the sepulchre, bound hand and foot with the fetters of a feudal despotism, and the dark napkin of ignorance upon her eyes,—I say it becomes this Assembly, and every man in it, to come at once to the discharge of a mighty duty, and assist in freeing our land from this sore bondage, by breaking the fetters of feudalism, and tearing the dark napkin of ignorance away. Shall I not be allowed to stand forward this night, and plead for the interposition of my fathers and brethren, to secure an universal and elevated education for all the people, even on such a ground as this?"

I have called this an eloquent passage; and such, in my judgment, it is. But I can scarcely claim for it the credit of being relevant. I think that the question of National Education was one whose consideration was fairly within the province of the Church courts, and that the right and duty of the General Assembly to consider it either needed no vindication, or might very easily have been vindicated. But that vindication should have rested on other grounds than the fact that some of our greatest men—our greatest saints or our greatest ecclesiastics—were at the same time our most patriotic citizens; seeing that from this fact it did not follow —whether it might or might not be true—that the consideration of social questions appertains properly to Church courts. Dr. Begg refers to what was in those days a burning question, the great Glen Tilt case; but I am confident that he would not have deemed it right that the General Assembly or any Church court should have intermeddled in that matter, however legitimate it might be for the members in their private capacity to take interest in it. Despite its irrelevancy to the matter in hand, I repeat that the passage is a

very eloquent one, and contains a powerful advocacy of an important truth, and a powerful refutation of an important error, although the truth is not precisely the one which Dr. Begg had to advocate, nor the error precisely that which he had to refute at that particular time.

Some remarks which Dr. Begg made in the Presbytery of Edinburgh on the 2d October led him into a somewhat keen controversy with Mr. Arnot, then of Glasgow, afterwards of Edinburgh. Dr. Begg was impressing on his Presbytery the importance of more vigorously prosecuting Home Mission work in our large cities. He stated that the work was necessarily a difficult and an expensive one, and that our people must put forth greater energy and make greater sacrifices if they are to stay the "lapsing" of multitudes of our people. "Great," he said, "as were the evils in Edinburgh in this respect, they were nothing compared with the state of Glasgow. Almost all of the Free Churches in Glasgow were to be found at the west end of the city, away from the dense masses of the Gallowgate, Calton, &c., in the east end, with its crowd of whisky-shops and every other means of demoralisation." This was surely a sufficiently harmless statement. It cast no reflection on any man or any congregation; it referred to a mere question of topography, and one would suppose that if the statement was inaccurate its inaccuracy should have been evinced by simple measurement. But Mr. Arnot seems to have thought that Dr. Begg charged the Glasgow Free Church ministers with a preference for the rich and "genteel" people over the necessitous, and so he introduced the subject into a speech in the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr. Dr. Begg replied in a letter, in which he disclaimed all intention of finding fault with the Glasgow congregations or their ministers, and asserted that the statement which he had made was strictly true, and that it was relevant to the very important subject which was under consideration of the Presbytery at the time. Mr. Arnot replied, asserting that,

whatever Dr. Begg's intention may have been, his statement was understood by many as concerning the Glasgow congregations. Dr. Begg answered in a long letter; in the closing paragraph is the following sentence:—"The matter excites in me, not anger, but overwhelming pity and alarm; and I will allow the whole Presbytery of Glasgow to abuse me for an hour apiece at every meeting at which they are in want of something better to do, if that may be the means of arresting public attention on this monstrous and growing evil, and doing something towards securing its remedy."

Undoubtedly Dr. Begg was right in calling the attention of the Free Church to a danger which is incident to all churches which are dependent for their support on the contributions of their members. I am not so confident that he has suggested the right remedy. Many causes which are beyond the control of the Church are leading to an ever-widening separation between the several grades of society.

One phase of this separation is the withdrawal of the places of residence of those who can afford it from the hearts of our cities to the suburbs. Those who thus withdraw desire, of course, to have churches in their own suburban localities, and those who still live in the central streets are unable to support Christian ordinances for themselves; all the more that in these streets there is a large and ever enlarging Irish and Romanist population. Dr. Begg's view seems to have been that this state of things should be met by the providing of endowments, and the immediate planting of churches in these localities. Now this is good, so far as it goes; and it is no answer to it to say that the Established Church has done no more,—indeed till lately it had done much less,—than the Free Church to meet the want. It might be well if our suburban residents would build suburban churches for themselves, and leave their former churches, with partial endowments, for the occupancy of the city residents. This has been very creditably

done by two of our Edinburgh congregations.[1] But this also is insufficient. Perhaps the problem is to be solved in a way which may not be theoretically the best, but which has various secondary advantages to recommend it: the method of congregational missions, in which a congregation undertakes the doing of home missionary work in a district, and gradually ripening the people for the privileges and the responsibilities of a congregation. Of this method also we have most creditable instances in Edinburgh.[2] But good as these methods are, neither any one of them, nor all of them together, seem to be sufficient to meet the constantly increasing evil. The weak point of them all, the chink in all their harness, is this. A popular young minister is inducted into what is called a territorial charge, a large congregation is soon formed, but it is *not* a territorial congregation, the "territory" in many cases furnishing a very small proportion of the membership. Of course this might be avoided by putting unpopular ministers into these charges! This would obviate one evil; but I need not point out that it would produce a greater evil. While I frankly point out the insufficiency and the defects of our home missionary work, I would give most emphatic utterance to my conviction that it is a most blessed work. If I might be allowed to make a somewhat egotistic statement, I would say that while it is my chief glory to have been for twenty years a foreign missionary, it is scarcely less a matter of satisfaction to have been for other twenty years a home missionary, as minister of one of our Edinburgh territorial churches. It is in great measure due to the exertions of the Free Church that the state of matters is not greatly worse than it is. But neither

[1] Barclay and Viewforth, which moved, first the one and then the other, from Fountainbridge.—T. S.

[2] Especially Fountainbridge, the Pleasance, Cowgate, and Stockbridge, formed in this way by the St. George's, St. John's, New North, and St. Andrew's congregations respectively.—T. S.

her exertions nor those of all the other Churches have been sufficient to diminish greatly the terrible evil. It may be questioned whether they have been able altogether to prevent its increase, though it is matter of thankfulness that they have greatly retarded that increase.

The period now under review was the epoch of what has been generally designated as the "Papal Aggression." For the first time since the Reformation Rome put forth the claims, which all intelligent Protestants well knew that she had never relinquished, to a substantive share in the government of the people of this country. Dr. Begg did not take a very prominent part in the agitation which ensued; but it needs not be said that the part which he did take was a decided one and a practical one. As this is one of the subjects to which his thoughts were constantly directed during a great part of his life, I must give, though with much abridgment, a speech which he delivered in the November Commission; the rather because it contains the first hint of an institution of which he may be regarded as the founder, and which has done, and under the able direction of Dr. Wylie is doing, much to diffuse a knowledge of the true character of Romanism, and to defeat its ceaseless machinations—the Protestant Institute of Scotland. In the Commission a series of resolutions were proposed by Dr. Candlish, seconded by Dr. Cunningham. Then Dr. Begg spoke:—

"Dr. Begg concurred thoroughly in the resolutions, and in the exposition given by Dr. Candlish of the general principles which they involved. He should like just to say a very little in reference to the duty which he thought they owed to the community in the way of taking active measures for the purpose of meeting and resisting not only this aggression, but the innumerable other aggressions of which this one was undoubtedly the herald; for they might rest assured that Popery would not draw back one single step which she had planted, but would endeavour, with the utmost energy, to fill up the bold outline which she had now chalked out. His

own fear was that, even as in past times they had once and again had a very thorough agitation on this question, but which had just as often subsided, without the adoption of any practical measures whatever—his fear was that the present agitation, strong and universal as it was, would end without the adoption of any practical measures which would likely accomplish, by the blessing of God, the object at which they aimed. He rejoiced in the proposal to preach a sermon on the subject[1]—most cordially did he rejoice in that. Many were the sermons he had preached to his own people on the subject, and he had already preached a sermon in reference to this very aggression. But they must not only, by preaching one sermon, endeavour to explain what Dr. Candlish had so well explained, viz., that there is an entire difference between the great anti-Christian system and any other of the many sects by which we are surrounded, but that in all the Word of God there is not, so far as he knows, any acknowledgment of Popery being a religion at all. The Divine Word always denounced Popery in language fitted to teach them that it is not a religion, but a studied diabolical attempt to root out and thwart religion. It was called 'that wicked,' the 'man of sin,' the 'son of perdition,' the 'mother of harlots and abominations of the earth,' and so forth; but in no case was it in the Word of God honoured with the title of religion; and, further, it would be found that while some uninstructed persons were apt to give credit to Popery for holding some essential truths of the Divine Word, every truth which bore immediately on the salvation of the sinner was denied or perverted by that system. It would be found that everything which would lead the soul to Christ was either completely denied or destructively perverted. He trusted, therefore, that those matters would be thoroughly made known to all their people; and, further, that, either in the pulpit or out of the pulpit, they would endeavour to disabuse the minds of the people of the erroneous impression that largely prevailed, viz., that whatever called itself religion was to be tolerated in doing everything which it chose

[1] The last of Dr. Candlish's resolutions was an instruction to ministers to preach a sermon on the subject on or about the second Sabbath of December; these resolutions to be read from the pulpit on the Sabbath previous to such sermon.—T. S.

for the purpose of advancing its claims, that the cloak of religion ought to secure impunity for what otherwise would be punished. In reference to the present movement of Popery, what would the brethren think of such a case as this? A most excellent man, connected with our own Church, engaged two servants who professed to be Protestants. By and by he found the children beginning to manifest very extraordinary feelings in reference to John Knox and the Reformation, and many other things which they held dear. . . . The worthy man discovered that he had got into his house two Popish emissaries, who, under the pretence of Protestantism, were actually corrupting his children, unknown to himself. Well, that might be called a part of religion; it might be called even a pious fraud; but he thought it ought not only to be dealt with in the way of exposure, but ought to be dealt with by the civil magistrate. He would have such persons put in the pillory. . . . Now, the question was, how they were to meet all this. Passing resolutions would not meet it—far less anything that Lord John Russell was likely to do, however much they might rejoice in the spirit of his letter. It must be something directly directed to the object—foot to foot. . . . He thought that the time was come when, in self-defence, they must address themselves to the people of England, and endeavour to make them as intelligent as they were evidently bitter in their feelings of hatred towards this whole system of Popery. . . . He believed the people hated Popery; but, at the same time, it was a comparatively unintelligent hatred. He would have those in this country who had been from their youth trained up in opposition to the system to go into that country and expound and explain the whole matter, so as to convey their intelligence to the common people of England, who were kept in ignorance by the hostility of the Puseyites and the monkish[1] sentimentalism of others, which would not allow them to break through the trammels of etiquette, for the purpose of getting at the people and explaining the system to them. He would also have a proper institute in Edinburgh—a counter *Propaganda*—with a proper library, which he would make every student in theology and every teacher that went down to the country

[1] Query "mawkish?"—T. S.

attend. . . . He would, therefore, have this institution established in Edinburgh, with a branch in Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen, and everywhere where Popery was to be found. He would meet it face to face, foot to foot, step to step. He would just say, further, if he might be borne with in saying so much, that one reason why he was most anxious for a universal system of education in this country, why he was so anxious that the Government should take it in hand, if Lord John Russell was really in earnest, was that they might have the means of spreading the light by which the darkness might be dispelled. One reason why he was specially anxious was, that the money now required for our denominational schools should be devoted to the extension of the Home Mission, as he believed that a wholesome system of education would be one mighty engine in the way of arresting the progress of this soul-destroying system."

The anti-papal agitation was apparently successful. The Ecclesiastical Titles Act was passed. Rome, by remaining quiet for a while, and biding her time, allowed it to become a dead letter, and got it repealed in a few years; and now her ecclesiastics are designated by these assumed titles even in official documents, and the "princes of the Church" take precedence of British nobles. If there be cynicism, is there not also truth in the saying, "There are thirty millions of people in this country—mostly fools"? Rome is no fool, whatever else she be.

Meantime Dr. Begg was prosecuting with characteristic energy his wide-branching scheme of social reformation, advocating especially the industrial employment of juveniles, soldiers, paupers, and criminals. In the *Witness* of 27th November he gives an interesting account of a visit which he paid to the "Perth Juvenile Industrial Farm," and strongly advocates the employment of many classes of our people in the cultivation of waste lands. In the present period of unprecedented agricultural depression, and with every prospect of our farmers having to compete continuously with

America in the supply of our people with food, it is more probable that much of our cultivated land will become comparatively waste than that much of our waste land shall be brought under cultivation. Under the changed circumstances, therefore, it may be that this is not the best department of industry in which to employ the classes in question. But none the less is it essential that they be employed in some kind—or probably in many and various kinds—of labour; and it ought to be emphatically stated that it is to Dr. Begg that we owe, if not the origination, at least the unwearied advocacy of this idea. In a lecture in the Queen Street Hall, delivered to a large audience, composed mainly of working men, on the 16th of December, he expounded his views on many social questions, dwelling especially on the acquisition of houses by working men, and in order to this, the facilitation of the transference of property in land—conveyance of land, we call it in Scotland. This scheme also, of the transmutation of tenants into proprietors, though he did not originate it, was greatly indebted to his powerful advocacy for the large measure of success that it has achieved, as many who are now reaping the advantage of it have been forward to acknowledge.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS—HIGHLAND DESTITUTION—PAPAL AGGRESSION—LAPSED MASSES—EDINBURGH IRISH MISSION—THE "BULWARK."

It is amusing to see the persistency with which Dr. Begg kept tending and turning the many irons which he now had in so many fires. In the Church courts he had to deal with the title-deeds of ecclesiastical property and with the liquidation of debt, as well as the subject of national education. In public meetings and in popular lectures he hammered on the subject of house accommodation and crofts for our working people; while everywhere and always, in and out of Church courts, he brought down his sledge-hammer on Popery, dealing with it at once in its doctrinal and its political aspects. In all his actings I see striking instances of what I have had occasion to notice more than once already, his self-knowledge and instinctive consciousness of his own strength and his own weakness. Well aware that he had nothing of the profound and varied learning, and little of the gigantic argumentative force, of Cunningham, little or nothing of the subtle analytic power of Candlish, he was a noble auxiliary to these champions of the truth, by reason of the persistency with which he set forth, and the common sense with which he illustrated, large and general views of the same truth. It was no part of his *rôle* to trace, with extensive and profound research, the gradual development of Romanism in its doctrinal, ecclesiastical, or political aspect, nor to unravel by distinctions nicer than their own the nice distinctions of its Jesuitical apologists. Enough for him that the Pope is Antichrist, the man of sin, the son of perdition. Where-

fore *Delenda est Carthago!* It were not well that all men should occupy ground like this; perhaps not well that many should occupy it; but it were much to be deprecated that none should occupy it. And bravely was it occupied by Dr. Begg. And, *mutatis mutandis,* the same may be said of his advocacy of other causes. Such a style of discussion was probably more fitted to strengthen the convictions of friends than to convince gainsayers; and it may be that the latter is a higher contribution to the advancement of the cause of truth than the former. But be that as it may, it is beyond controversy that Dr. Begg played an important and indispensable part in the conduct of the religious, ecclesiastical, and social questions of his time—a part which no one else was so well qualified to play.

The first public appearance of his that I find chronicled in 1851 was at a public dinner given to Dr. Gunn, the great advocate of the removal of the restriction of the office of parochial teacher to members of the Established Church. In the course of an eloquent speech on that occasion he said:—

"But his chief reason for coming to that meeting was to declare his unabated and unalterable attachment to the cause of national education, as that which alone could meet the great and clamant wants of the community. The time seemed to be fully come when they must merge their little differences, in so far as they did not involve questions of principle, in a vigorous attempt to secure the universal diffusion of wholesome knowledge. They could not fail to see around them vast evils connected with this subject. They had teachers of all kinds starving on the most paltry salaries—smaller salaries than those of many domestic servants and artisans. It was impossible to have high education unless the teachers were more adequately supported. Besides this, the teachers of the public schools were selected exclusively from a very limited section of the community. Men who took the liberty of dissenting from the Established Church, however able and excellent, were rigidly excluded from the office of teacher. Let them be as learned as their friend Dr. Gunn, as eloquent as their

chairman,[1] and devotedly Christian and distinguished as Dr. Chalmers, they might aspire to any other offices in the community—might become magistrates, sit on the judicial bench, and have the lives, the liberties, and the fortunes of the whole people submitted to their authority—but they durst not aspire to the peculiarly lofty office of a parish schoolmaster; or if they did, they would soon find their grievous mistake. Such a system was so utterly antiquated and irrational, so repugnant to common sense, and inconsistent with the best interests of the community, that it only required a steady and persevering assault to extirpate it."

About this time the subject of "Highland destitution" came to be a prominent one, and from this time Dr. Begg took a somewhat prominent part in its discussion. Alas that, after thirty-six years, he should have left the problem as little solved as when he found it, and that at this day its solution seems more beset with difficulties than ever before. The political economists are right in their conclusion that, *for the increase of national wealth*, the best method is to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest; and, moreover, that *towards this end* sheep and deer and sport yield a better return than laborious and virtuous men. The economists may fairly claim, therefore, that *their* part of the problem is solved, and we may give them all credit for its solution. But it is no new discovery that there may be a condition of things under which we shall find that "wealth accumulates and men decay;" and I do not think that any reasonable man will deny that this result has been produced by the action of political economy in our Scottish Highlands. In several communications to the *Witness* about this time Dr. Begg forcibly and convincingly stated the magnitude and terribleness of the evil, but acknowledged himself baffled in the attempt to provide an adequate remedy.

The "papal aggression" gave occasion to the excitement of much Protestant feeling throughout the country, and may

[1] Sheriff Gordon.—T. S.

be regarded as a critical epoch in the history of Protestantism. Among other means adopted in Edinburgh for the excitement of this feeling was the delivery of a course of lectures on various parts of the Romish controversy. In such a course we might expect to find Dr. Begg taking part, and are prepared for the following paragraph in the *Witness* of 19th February 1851:—

"LECTURES ON POPERY.—The fifth of the series of lectures on Popery at present being delivered in Edinburgh by ministers of various Protestant denominations was redelivered on Monday evening in Bristo Street Church (Rev. Dr. Peddie's) by the Rev. Dr. Begg, the subject of lecture being Purgatory and Indulgences. Long before the hour for commencing the large chapel was crowded to overflowing, upwards of 2400 pennies having been collected at the door (the price of admission being a penny), whilst nearly 1000 persons were obliged to leave, unable to obtain admission. The Reverend Doctor was listened to with breathless attention for nearly two hours, and was frequently applauded rapturously during the course of his lecture. The interest which has been taken in this course of lectures—each lecture being delivered, first on Wednesday in Queen Street Hall, and afterwards, on the subsequent Monday, to the working classes in Bristo Street Church—instead of decreasing, appears to be greatly on the increase. There were, we understand, two Roman Catholic priests present at the lecture."

At the meeting of the Assembly's Commission in March, Dr Begg made an important speech on the subject of the papal aggression and the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill. The following passage, read in the light of the existing state of matters, indicates the far-sightedness of its author. The Romanists had boasted that they had overthrown Lord John Russell's Government, by uniting with the Opposition so as to place the Government in a minority.

"He believed that Papists themselves were anxious that that idea should go abroad, and he believed, also, that they had done all that they could to bring that result about, by

the determination which constantly animated them to place the interests of their superstition above every political question whatsoever. In so far, he thought it would be good for Protestant members to imitate them. It was lamentable to find how far Christian principle was subordinated to mere political considerations by them. With papists, on the other hand, it was the very reverse, and he thought *that* one of the causes for alarm. For though the papists and their friends in Parliament were few in number, and likely to be fewer, they were so resolute and determined, and so placed the interests of their own system above every other consideration whatever, that, taking into account the torpor of the others, it was likely that they would succeed better than might be expected from their numbers. He was not sure, however, that they had upset the Government, as other more immediate causes were at work. It had gone abroad that forty members could at all times upset a Government. This, of course, could apply only when parties were undetermined or nearly balanced. But if they could get Protestant members to be as resolute in maintaining the truth as the others in supporting their own superstition, it would be impossible for the Roman Catholic members to carry any vote prejudicial to the Protestant interests of the nation. . . . . He did not care about the assumption of titles, or of what colour the papal stockings were. They were not to be frightened by names; they must deal with the essence of the mischief."

As things are now, and as there is every reason to believe that they will be in the future, the Romanists have it in their power to convert either of the great political parties into a majority or a minority at their pleasure, and they are determined to use this terrible power, regardless of any consequences but the interests of their own system. There is but one way whereby this state of matters can be coped with. It is the formation of a Protestant party, composed of the honest and patriotic members of the two great political parties. Ordinarily these two parties will take—and ought to take—their several ways, and as the resultant of divergent forces good government will be promoted. But party spirit

and party action should be suspended whensoever such suspension is necessary for frustrating the designs of Rome. Is there patriotism enough in our House of Commons to afford the hope of this? I do not profess to be void of political preferences and prejudices. But to me it seems that the question whether Lord Salisbury or Mr. Gladstone is to be at the head of affairs is altogether insignificant, as compared with the question whether Mr. Parnell is to hold in his hand the balance of power and to dictate terms to each party in turn. It were vain to expect that we shall ever see such a Conservative or such a Liberal majority in the House of Commons as would not be more than neutralised by the union of the Parnellites with the minority. It is a dark prospect that is before us. Help, Lord, for vain is the help of man!

Although Dr. Begg was not now Convener of the Assembly's Home Missions Committee, he none the less took a deep interest in the operations of that Committee, and in the efforts of the Church to supply the spiritual needs of the masses in our ever-growing cities. In March an overture was proposed in the Presbytery of Edinburgh by Mr. Sym on this subject, and in seconding its transmission Dr. Begg pled for a revision of the Free Church arrangements, and for the removal of some of the congregations into the destitute districts. "In connection with this subject, it occurred to him that the Free Church, in approaching this question, must do so very much in the way of reviewing the whole of her position in reference to the country at large—doing, in fact, what she had never been able to do since the Disruption, because many measures which they adopted then were measures to which they were forced by the exigency of the case, but measures which it were well for them, in his judgment, calmly to review. He thought they ought to look to the whole position with due consideration, and to seek to ascertain how far they could both increase their means of

usefulness, and make their existing means more available for the accomplishment of the great object. . . . Further, it appeared to him that a very important question would be found at the very threshold of their operations, whether it was not possible to make their existing staff more available in meeting the evils of their large cities. The necessity of the case required them to set up churches in many very insignificant localities at the Disruption; but it was not necessary that they should continue to keep ministers labouring to, and spending their strength upon, a very handful of people in those places, at the very time that thousands and hundreds of thousands of individuals were left to perish for lack of knowledge, say in such a place as Glasgow." It is much to be regretted that the advice here given by Dr. Begg was little heeded. The evil has gone on increasing, and the difficulty of dealing with it has been enhanced. I suppose there is not any one of us in the Free Church who is not now convinced that a considerable number of our congregations ought to be suppressed, or united to others, in order to set free men and means for the promotion of mission work in other localities. But congregations, like all other beings, have an insuperable aversion to extinction—

> "A pleasing hope, a fond desire,
> A longing after immortality,
> A secret dread and inward horror
> Of falling into nought—a shrinking of the soul
> Back on herself, and startling at destruction."

The feeling is a commendable one, with which every right-minded man must sympathise. But none the less must the question be considered with exclusive reference to the general good, first of the general community, and secondarily—*sed longo intervallo*—of the Free Church. The thing cannot be done too gently. But done it must be; and every year's delay increases at once the evil to be cured and the difficulty of the cure.

An unpleasant controversy arose at this time on the subject of the General Assembly's Manse Fund. Dr. Begg, holding, with most of his brethren, that all our congregations ought to have manses, proposed that a certain number of congregations, of which Newington was one, should be put on the list of congregations to which grants should be given in aid of the building or purchase of manses. Mr. Gray of Perth, one of the keenest of controversialists and one of the most generous of men, introduced the subject into the Presbytery of Perth, and in no honeyed terms charged Dr. Begg with a selfish desire to aid the richer congregations, and especially his own, at the expense of the poorer. Dr. Candlish, with his wonted chivalry, undertook the defence of Dr. Begg in the Presbytery of Edinburgh; and thus the unedifying spectacle was exhibited of two Presbyteries of the Free Church fighting against each other. Fortunately the matter soon came to an end, and left not a shade of unkindly feeling on the minds of any of those who took part in it.

Dr. Begg was not a member of the Assembly of 1851; but he appears to have had the honour conferred on him—unexampled, so far as my memory serves me—of being requested to address the Assembly on the subject of Popery. He accordingly delivered a racy speech, referring mainly to Mr. M'Menamy's work in Edinburgh. The following short extract will be read with interest:—

"They would find sometimes a turn given to a discussion so rich and so remarkable as to illustrate at once the acuteness of the Irish understanding, and to bring the slower Scotch wits almost to a stand. One of them asked one evening: 'What do you say to this objection—Christ said to Peter, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church?"' 'Ah,' said one, 'turn up Peter, and see what he says to it himself (1 Pet. ii. 6, 7)—"Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone," and "unto you who believe He is precious" —not *I am* precious, but *He is* precious.' On another occasion the question of Purgatory was being discussed, and it was

affirmed that there was no Purgatory. A burly-looking Patlander got up and said, 'But there is a Purgatory, and I will prove it by a passage in Peter:—"He went to the spirits in prison."' 'Ah, but,' said one, 'look what goes before that. It was by "which spirit" he went, and it was in the days of Noah.' 'Well,' said Dr. Begg, 'what is really your idea about Purgatory?' 'Oh,' said he, 'I believe that all the saints were kept in Purgatory till the death of Christ, and then Christ went and preached to them, and delivered them out of Purgatory.' 'Now,' said he (Dr. Begg), 'how do you prove that that was the case?' Said he, 'Where do you find any passage to prove that that was *not* the case?' 'Oh,' said he (Dr. Begg), 'it does not belong to me to disprove it. You say it is so, and are bound to prove it; but I will prove the contrary.' I quoted a number of passages, and, amongst the rest, referred to Moses and Elias appearing in glory on the Mount of Transfiguration before the death of Christ. The Irishman thought this was rather a finisher; but in their characteristic way he quickly rejoined that, after all, he did not think they could have been in heaven, or they would not have come out of it. 'Ah! but you will notice that they could not have been in Purgatory, or they could not have *got* out of it.'"

The peroration of this eloquent speech must be given entire:—

"What a land is this in which we live, and with what noble recollections is it associated! If an ancient father of the Church said that his interest in Rome did not proceed from its imperial dignity, or its numerous inhabitants, or its power stretching from sea to sea, but from this, that Paul had walked its streets and preached to its inhabitants, I am sure that this country of ours derives all its dignity, not from anything in its soil or in its climate, but from this, that it was the land, of all others in the world, where men on bended knees and with uplifted hands have consecrated themselves and their substance to the service of the living God, and by a solemn covenant have abjured the errors of the 'man of sin.' This it is which still irradiates with glory the mountains of Scotland. And yet here is again the old enemy thundering at our gates. We must tear out the bloody

pages of history for a thousand years; we must erase the inscriptions from ten thousand monuments; nay, we must silence—(and we desire to say it with all reverence)—even the voices of murdered saints, whose souls are under the altar of God, crying, 'O Lord, holy and true, how long wilt Thou not avenge our blood?' We must silence these voices before we forget that the triumph of Popery is the downfall of spiritual Christianity, the end of freedom, and perdition of all that is dear to us as men and Christians. I have, in one sense, no fear for the cause of God. Neither, in one sense, have I any fear for the cause of Protestantism. In one sense, God will plead His own cause. But He may do it in such a way as to remove the Gospel from us, because we despised our privileges, which He may give to other lands that will bring forth the fruits thereof. The crisis is truly urgent; and I am jealous for the honour of this Church in the great battle against the Man of Sin. It is our Presbyterian organisation and scriptural creed that are eminently adapted to meet all the efforts of that unscriptural system. No fear have I for the cause of God; but I am most anxious that the sword of Caledonia should be seen, if I so may speak, foremost in this great fight, and that in the very hottest of the struggle, in the very front of the embattled host, we should be seen bearing the blue banner of our beloved Free Church of Scotland."

As one means of carrying out the measures so strenuously advocated by Dr. Begg, it was resolved by many zealous men of several denominations to issue a monthly magazine, treating exclusively of subjects connected with the Romish controversy. The first number appeared on the 1st of July 1851, and from that day to this the *Bulwark* has regularly appeared, and has done excellent service in the cause of truth. From the first Dr. Begg was its ruling spirit, and for twenty-one years he was its editor. It was his frequent boast that, although he wrote most uncompromising articles, and published in every issue equally uncompromising ones by others, and although the Romanists were constantly on the watch, they never found an opportunity of bringing one action of libel against him. He used also to state with much satisfaction and gratitude that every one of the 250

numbers which bore his name as editor was *bonâ fide* edited and arranged by himself, and that not one failed to be issued on the proper day. Although I happened to be his successor in the editorship of the *Bulwark*, yet, as I have no connection with it now, save as a very unfrequent contributor, I may be permitted here to commend this magazine to the support of all who are interested in the cause of truth. There never was a time when it was more needful for the friends of truth to be armed at all points, and there is no periodical which more earnestly or more honestly advocates the cause of Protestantism—that is, of Christianity—in opposition to the deadly errors of Romanism, and the insidious workings of the Papacy, than does the *Bulwark* under the editorship of my friend Mr. Divorty. I may be permitted to say that it was one of Dr. Begg's idiosyncracies to put great value upon certain woodcuts, one of which appeared in each issue of the *Bulwark*. None of them were good. Some were simply hideous. But the editor could never be persuaded that they were not serviceable to the cause. Indeed I believe that he regarded them as contributing more to popular impression than his own most trenchant articles and those of his powerful staff. And yet Dr. Begg was not destitute of artistic taste, although it never had been cultivated.

Dr. Begg was one of the speakers at a public meeting held in Edinburgh on the 9th of December on the subject of the Maynooth grant. He spoke in his usual strain, and with his usual power. His speech was a vigorous protest against the infatuation of those who were professing to be zealous for Protestantism, and yet were in various ways playing into the hands of Rome. At that time he spoke the sentiments of the great body of earnest religious men in our country; but while he continued to the last to hold and to speak the same sentiments, the zeal of many waxed cold, and latterly he was regarded as a bigot and a fanatic; while Rome all the while was making her profit of all events that occurred, ever active while her opponents were asleep.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SUSTENTATION FUND — "RATING" PRINCIPLE — PROTESTANT APATHY — UNIVERSITY TESTS — HANDBOOK OF POPERY — FACTIOUS OPPOSITION — CORDIALITY OF LEADING OPPONENTS — UNION WITH ORIGINAL SECEDERS—PURITANISM—LEGREE—PROBATIONERS.

It was about this time that a controversy began to be waged in the Free Church, which assumed various phases, and came into prominence in many forms in the course of the succeeding years, regarding the distribution of the Sustentation Fund. The idea of that fund is one of which all Free Churchmen are, and have good cause to be, proud. It was the solution of a great problem as to the supply of Christian ordinances to districts whose inhabitants are sparse and poor. It was a magnificent embodiment of the principle that it is blessed to receive and more blessed to give. A certain class of controversialists have of late been taunting us with the large proportion of the number of our aid-receiving to that of our self-sustaining or aid-giving congregations: and some Free Churchmen have endeavoured to apologise for this fact, and have expressed hopes that the state of the case may be altered, and the proportion reversed erelong. I venture to say that no intelligent Free Churchman can have any sympathy with the apology or the hope. If the Free Church is to be, to any considerable extent, a power for good in the land, she must always have a large number of congregations which cannot be self-sustaining. It is much to be desired that the aid-receiving congregations should be gradually transferred to the self-sustaining or aid-giving list. But their place

should be taken by new charges which cannot be, and which ought not to be, self-sustaining if the Free Church is to do her part in realising the ideal of the Divine Founder of the Church: TO THE POOR THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED. I care little for the taunts of adversaries, but it does grieve me when Free Churchmen exhibit shame of what is their glory. With all this, it cannot be denied that the principle of an equal dividend to congregations, without reference to the adequacy of the contributions of some of them, is liable to abuse. It has been abused in some instances, and from time to time attempts have been made to impose a check on the abuse. One great difficulty in the imposition of such a check consists in this, that it can scarcely be applied except to the aid-receiving congregations, while it is certain that many of them are contributing most faithfully according to their ability, and are quite as much entitled to the equal dividend as congregations whose contributions are much larger in their amount, but may be much smaller in proportion to the number and the means of their members. I may say, by anticipation, that two checks have actually been imposed, not perhaps theoretically perfect, but which, in practice, are found upon the whole to work satisfactorily. The one is putting new congregations virtually on probation before admitting them to the equal dividend "platform." This does not prevent necessary church extension, while it prevents a reckless and unnecessary multiplication of charges. The other must be admitted to be a partial abandonment of the equal dividend principle. But then it is introduced only at a point when experience has shown that that principle has done its work. It is what is called the "surplus" fund. The equal dividend is fixed at a certain sum (at present £160 a year), and all the surplus is divided, according to certain simple and intelligible rules, among congregations, whether self-sustaining or not, according to the number of their members and the rate of the average of their contributions. Of course over

and above this, in many cases, is the congregational "supplement," with which the Church does not claim the right to interfere. These three then—Dividend, Surplus, and Supplement—constitute the resources for the maintenance of our ministry. And I do not think there is any difference of opinion respecting the continuance of all of them, only the rules for the distribution of the "surplus" are frequently discussed; and it is quite possible that they are capable of improvement.

The Sustentation Fund Committee in 1851 proposed a check, on what was called the "rating" principle. They laid it before the Commission of Assembly, who sent it down to Presbyteries, with a request that they should report their approval or disapproval of it to the March Commission of next year. It was in substance this, that a Committee of Assembly should inquire into the circumstances of all the congregations, and should fix for each a minimum sum which should be necessary to be contributed by them as a condition of their receiving a full dividend. The proposal came before the Presbytery of Edinburgh in January 1852, and Dr. Begg moved disapproval of it in an admirable speech, in which he gave the fullest credit to the proposers of it for honesty of purpose and earnestness of desire to correct abuses and do the greatest possible amount of good. He argued that the evil arose from the undue multiplication of charges. The fund had steadily increased in a wonderful way. But the dividend had not increased to any great extent, because the number of sharers had been enlarged too rapidly. It is not necessary to go into the question, whose interest has passed away by the imposition of the first of the checks that I referred to in last paragraph. I shall therefore content myself with extracting a few happy sentences. After quoting a passage from the proposal as submitted by the Sustentation Committee, he says:—"Now, here is the gist of the new plan. From this it appears that the committee to be appointed by

the Assembly are to sit in judgment on every congregation throughout the Church, to fix the amount which each congregation *ought to give* to the Sustentation Fund, and to deal with the ministers in accordance with the extent to which their people come up, or do not come up, to the rate so fixed. I know very well that the language used is very gentle language. It is very important to use gentle language in a case of this sort. The word used is that it is to be an equitable *adjustment* of the sum that must be paid, as if we were fitting on a garment. When dentists, I am told, are about to wrench a tooth from a man's jaw, they are in the habit of using the most gentle and soft expressions, saying, 'You must part with the tooth,' 'I must remove it,' and so forth; whilst immediately after he is startled by a crash almost as if a cart-wheel were going over his head; so, in like manner, we have here what I believe to be a most arbitrary and tyrannical scheme described kindly as a mere adjustment. Gentle and kind names are used, as if the object were simply to allocate the precise sums to be paid by the several congregations. In point of fact, however, when the matter is looked at closely, it assumes all the form of a regular tax."

Dr. Begg further argued that if there were to be a committee to "adjust" the sums to be paid by the several congregations to the Sustentation Fund, there might as well be committees to adjust their contributions to the missionary operations of the Church.

The counter-motion, for the approval of the proposal, was moved by Dr. Cunningham, and after a two days' debate, was carried by a majority of 9 (26–17), Dr. Begg and others dissenting. A pretty extensive and keen newspaper controversy followed, several letters being published on either side, and two leaders appearing in the *Witness*, evidently by its accomplished editor, Mr. Hugh Miller, who strongly supported Dr. Begg's view. When the matter came before the March Commission, it was found that, although the change had been

approved by a majority of Presbyteries, yet it had been disapproved by so many that it was deemed inexpedient to take immediate action on it. This was moved by Dr. Candlish, though he was himself strongly in favour of the proposal, and was unanimously agreed to.

Towards the end of February we find Dr. Begg addressing an earnest letter to the *Witness* on the progress of Romanism and the apathy of Protestants. The following extract is as seasonable now as it was then:—

"In short, on the one hand we have certainly the worst of causes in Popery; but then there is energy, system, sacrifice, and untiring devotedness in promoting it. On the other hand, we have the best of causes, the very cause of God, in Protestantism. But there is no system, little unity, the most paltry sacrifices, when the magnitude of the object is considered, and a constant and apparently irresistible tendency to go to sleep, until aroused again by a new alarm, 'The Philistines be upon thee, Samson.' If the Christians of this country could only understand one another, and act together; if true Protestants were placed in the van of this great battle, in Parliament and elsewhere; if, instead of paltry and peddling debates, we could get the whole country educated; if the old system of scriptural catechising were everywhere resumed by the ministers;—if all this were accompanied by willing contributions for important Protestant objects, and by a humble trust in the omnipotence of God, I should have no doubt of immediate, as I have none of ultimate, victory. But if we are to suffer the present state of matters to continue, we may rest assured that the triumph of Popery in Britain is merely a question of time. 'Deliverance will arise from another quarter,' and Babylon shall without doubt ultimately fall. But God may resolve, in the meantime, to be avenged on a cowardly and degenerate race, unworthy of those noble ancestors who shed their blood like water to secure for them an unfettered press, a free pulpit, and an open Bible, by letting them feel the evil of which they refuse to be warned."

Another matter in which Dr. Begg was greatly interested at this time was the abolition of University Tests. To him

this was a very delicate matter. No man was less latitudinarian than he was; no man more earnest in advocating that education, whether primary or secondary, should be Christian; no man more convinced that in order to this the educators must be Christian men. But he was convinced by many facts that these ends were not secured by requiring men to sign the Confession of Faith, when they might openly state, "I am willing to sign it, but I do not say that I believe it:" and when there was no authority vested anywhere to ascertain that their teaching was in accordance with it. Although in so delicate a matter he probably was not always consistent with himself, he seems to have generally advocated a negative test, to the extent that the occupants of what are commonly called secular chairs should come under an obligation not to teach anything subversive of Christian truth.

In 1852 Dr. Begg made his first essay of book-authorship, by the publication of his "Handbook of Popery."[1] This book has had, and still has, an extensive circulation, having passed through several editions, and afterwards been stereotyped. No one who reads it will have any difficulty in judging as to the cause of its popularity. I have had occasion ere now to state in substance that the chief element of Dr. Begg's strength was his knowledge of his own strength and of his own weakness. This remark is illustrated and confirmed by the "Handbook of Popery." There are many questions bearing on the Romanist controversy whose discussion requires extensive erudition, historical research, and nice scholarship. But there are many other matters at issue which require for their treatment only intelligent observation and plain statement. To the latter class of topics almost exclusively Dr. Begg confines himself. Thus he has produced a book of much utility. While it may be admitted that it does not stand in a very

[1] "A Handbook of Popery; or, Text-Book of Missions for the Conversion of Romanists, being Papal Rome tested by Scripture, History, and its Recent Workings. By James Begg, D.D. With an appendix of documents. Edinburgh, 1852."

high rank of theological or ecclesiastical controversy, it stands high in its own rank. I venture to hint that the Handbook, instead of being constantly issued in its original form, or with only slight variations, might with advantage be revised and extended, so that it might present other aspects of the Romanist controversy. As it is, while it is not the book that we would recommend to the student who desires to have a full and minute knowledge of the Romanist system in all its phases, it is a book which may safely be put into the hand of an honest inquirer—Romanist or Protestant—with confidence that the former will be staggered, and the latter will be confirmed in his faith.

In one respect the General Assembly of 1852 may be said to form an epoch in Dr. Begg's history as an ecclesiastic. Hitherto he had been often engaged in keen controversy on matters arising within the Free Church, and his powers had been taxed to the uttermost in assault and defence. But with scarcely a momentary exception the combatants had not regarded one another as opposing partizans, but each had been ready to give his opponent the fullest credit for honesty of desire to promote the interests which all admitted to be the interests of all. The only difference was as to the ways in which these interests could be best advanced. But when the "rating" proposal of the Sustentation Committee came before the Assembly of 1852, and it was moved that the proposal should not indeed take immediate effect, but that it should be suspended for a year, and that the committee should have power during that year to deal with Deacons' Courts and Congregations; and when Dr. Begg rose, evidently with the purpose of opposing the scheme, the Report says—"Dr. Begg, who was received with loud applause and partial hissing, said," &c., and throughout a long and able speech it is manifest that a portion of his audience were determined to put a bad construction on his most harmless utterances. For example, when he was speaking of the impossibility of estimating

the resources of a congregation without instituting inquisitorial inquiries, he very naturally illustrated his argument by reference to congregations which might contain one or two very wealthy members. He said, "A very wealthy man said to me lately—Take the case of the Presbytery of Breadalbane; your estimating committee, on coming to the congregation in which Lord Breadalbane sits, find in this particular net, to use a figure, a very large fish, and they are to pronounce an estimate." One would think that it was impossible for any man of ordinary intelligence to fail to see that the Marquis of Breadalbane was named, only because he was the member of the Free Church of highest rank, and probably of greatest wealth, certainly of great liberality. Dr. Begg's illustration would have gone for nothing, would have been worse than useless for his purpose, had it not assumed, what all his hearers knew, the great liberality of his Lordship. And yet we find that this illustration called forth "hisses," which were indeed lost in "applause." But this was not all; for, to our astonishment, we read further: "Mr. Stewart of Glen-Athole asked whether Dr. Begg, by the rules of the house, was to be allowed to investigate into the circumstances of any gentleman." In the course of his speech Dr. Begg introduced some of his good stories, and at the end of it we read that he was greeted with "Loud applause." One of these stories I must give, if it were only because it is a different version from that which I heard in my boyish days: "I remember the story of a wealthy lawyer in Glasgow, who had a clerk to whom he used to dictate letters, and being a Highlander, and not very good at the English tongue, it is said that the clerk used sometimes to correct his master's errors. On one occasion, the clerk being called on to write to dictation a letter of sympathy to a friend of the lawyer, who had lost his wife, the lawyer instructed his clerk to write, 'Sir, I congratulate you on the death of your worthy wife.' 'Would it not be better to say *condole?*'

suggested the clerk. 'No, no,' said the lawyer, 'put it down *condole*, as I bid you,' taking to himself the credit of the superior knowledge of the poor clerk." How the story came originally from the pen of Mr. Joseph Miller I have no means of ascertaining. But according to my version of it the lawyer maintained his ground, insisting that the clerk should write *congratulate*, on the ground that *it* and *condole* are "synonymous terms."

The matter ended pleasantly enough. The subsequent speakers on the other side, Sir Henry Moncreiff, Dr. Cunningham, Professor Miller, and Dr. Duff, spoke with hearty recognition of the services which Dr. Begg had all along rendered to the Church. But the hisses with which he was greeted before opening his mouth, and the absurd interruption by Mr. Stewart, indicate that there were some members who were disposed to offer him a factious opposition. Many a time in the course of subsequent years he fought side by side with those whom he now opposed; but it is in this Assembly that there first appears a disposition on the part of some small men to regard him as a leader of an "opposition party."

It must be distinctly understood, however, that there was no breach, nor any appearance of such, between Dr. Begg and those whom we may call the leaders of the Assembly, Dr. Candlish, Dr. Cunningham, and Dr. Robert Buchanan. This was indicated by the fact that Dr. Begg cordially supported an overture on the subject of parochial schools and schoolmasters which was introduced by Dr. Candlish and supported by Dr. Buchanan. On the subject of Popery too, Dr. Cunningham, with his usual generosity and self-depreciation, paid a hearty compliment to the merits of Dr. Begg.

"PRINCIPAL CUNNINGHAM rose to express his cordial concurrence in the remarks made by Mr. Gibson, and his sense of the important service rendered by him to the cause of

Protestant truth, as well as the ability and learning with which he conducted the *Scottish Protestant*. In regard to the *Bulwark*, though it might be supposed that he (Dr. Cunningham), as revising editor, might have a great deal to do in connection with that publication, he must publicly state what was undoubtedly the truth, that its efficiency and success had been mainly owing to the ability, energy, and activity of Dr. Begg. He (Dr. Cunningham) intended, however, to bestow a somewhat larger share of attention upon this journal than he had hitherto done. He eulogised Dr. Begg's 'Handbook of Popery,' and also the pamphlet published by Mr. Thomson of Banchory upon the same subject."

The most important proceeding of the Assembly of 1852 was the union betwixt the Free Church and the Original Seceders. I must give Dr. Begg's speech on this subject in full—or rather as fully as it was reported at the time—not only on the ground of its immediate importance, but also on account of its relation to proceedings which began ten years later.

"Dr. Begg.—I have great pleasure in seconding the motion.[1] Much pains has been spent on the proposed deliverance, which, as far as I can see, will meet the purpose of admitting our brethren of the Secession on terms quite honourable and consistent on their part, and quite consistent with the principles we ourselves maintain. I rejoice in the financial part of the arrangement, as any other would have been extremely liable to misrepresentation, and might have induced suspicious persons to cast an unnecessary and unwarrantable reproach on the disinterestedness of our brethren. But it occurs to me that we are enacting a part of history; that this is in reality a most important step in the progress of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. I rejoice in it because it seems to me an evidence not only in favour of the view we have taken of our own position and principles, as being identical with those of the ancient reformers, but that intelligent men are prepared to look at the real objects at which our ancestors aimed, more than at the mere technicalities of the documents they have left behind them. I am satisfied that had

[1] Which had been made by Dr. Candlish.—T. S.

Knox, Melville, and Henderson lived at the present day, they would at once see, in the great earnestness with which this Church is pursuing the objects which they had in view, an evidence of that real succession which can be distinguished apart altogether from mere technicalities; and it seems to me, with a view to the world at large, a most important matter that this union is to be effected. The only regret I have in reference to Presbyterians disconnected with the Established Church is, that we cannot see our way to a larger union. I do not say that there is any immediate probability of our seeing it. But now that a century has passed, and we are standing in the front of the battle, contending against the greatest enemy of our common Protestantism, and almost in the last entrenchment, to meet a foe that has trodden down nearly all the rest of Europe, what a glorious thing it would be if all the sections of Presbyterians, driven from time to time from the pale of the Church, were prepared to unite to-day on this floor, and shaking hands together over the records of our reforming ancestors, stand front to front against the common enemy they also had to face. Scotchmen are, however, proverbially metaphysical, and that tendency has led to more splinterings than have been absolutely necessary. We have had even some remarkably little divisions among Presbyterians. Some time ago there was a small division consisting of only two ministers, and these two flattered themselves that they were the two witnesses referred to in the Revelation. By and by, however, the two fell out among themselves, and now it has become a question whether any witnesses exist at all.[1] These, and other events that have occurred in connection with divisions, are to be deplored; and just in the same proportion ought we to rejoice in anything like a tendency to union, for that in itself is a great blessing, and especially a union founded on principles so honourable, so noble, and so entirely scriptural as those enunciated by Dr. Candlish; and a union with men, many of whom I have the pleasure of reckoning among my most valued and most endeared friends. With all my heart I rejoice in the prospect of welcoming them among us; and am satisfied that some of them will be found foremost and

[1] This sentence called forth a blustering letter from one of the two referred to. I am not aware that Dr. Begg took any notice of it.—T. S.

most vigorous in the contendings to which we may have to resort in fighting the fight of faith, as good soldiers of the Cross."

It was in July of this year that the Presbytery of Edinburgh resolved to cut their connection with Mr. M'Menamy and the Irish Mission. Dr. Begg reluctantly acquiesced in this procedure, being still persuaded that the mission was doing much good, but admitting that it could not be efficiently superintended by the Presbytery, on account of the differences of opinion existing among the members. He intimated that the mission would be continued, but on a non-denominational basis. And this, as has already been stated, was done.

We next find our versatile friend, in a letter to the *Witness,* bringing his strong common sense to bear upon the advocacy of the opening of West Princes Street Gardens to the public. He always rejoiced in having been the first in an agitation which issued in the opening of the East Gardens. It was not he that led the agitation respecting the larger and finer western portion, but he brought all his influence to bear on the movement. It was not immediately successful, but he lived to see every citizen of Edinburgh have free access to a garden or park which in respect of natural situation is simply unrivalled, while in its laying out it has few superiors among the public parks of Europe. With him the advocacy of such movements was a matter of principle. In the letter before us he says:—

"The opening of places for public health and relaxation is most closely connected with all great social and moral questions. Cities are necessary; but men were never made to be pent up in unbroken and feverish masses. And since every family in a city cannot have a garden of its own, the next best thing is to have public gardens, in which a man with his children may spend a portion of his leisure, and breathe the pure air of heaven. If this be not attended to, the only

alternative is to increase disease, enlarge the infirmaries, multiply the whisky-shops, and swell the assessments. Men must have recreation. To imagine the contrary is to betray an utter ignorance of human nature, and of all experience. The only question is, Shall it be innocent or sinful?"

Are these really the words, these the sentiments, of the stern, morose, puritanical Dr. Begg? These are his words. These were his sentiments from the beginning of his public career to the close of his life. And let me say, in passing, that these sentiments are not in discord with those of the much misunderstood and much maligned Puritans of England. They, of course, maintained a hostile attitude to the Book of Sports, and to the frivolities and dissipations and vices of the Restoration period. There might also be individuals among them who gave occasion to the current representations of their views and sentiments. But I am confident that there never was in England a body of men less tinctured with what is commonly designated as Puritanism than were the great leaders of the Puritan host.

In November the subject of the parochial schools was discussed in the Edinburgh Presbytery. The motion made by Dr. Candlish was seconded and cordially supported by Dr. Begg, and was passed unanimously. Not that Dr. Candlish and Dr. Begg were perfectly in accord with each other as to the precise character that a national system should assume; but they thoroughly agreed in this, that the relation between the parochial schools and the Established Church must be changed.

Dr. Begg's name was very unnecessarily introduced into a controversy towards the close of the year. A pamphlet was published under the title of "Uncle Tom in the Free Church." The enslaved race were the probationers, of whom the anonymous author was one, the enslavers were the ministers, and the Legree was Dr. Begg. I have not seen the pamphlet; but it was dealt with by Hugh Miller in a way that only

excessive badness could justify. The slavery of the probationers consisted in this, that after the Disruption an allowance of £60 a year was given to those probationers who then cast in their lot with the Free Church. For a few years, I suppose, this grant was made also to the probationers who were licensed from year to year. It was on the motion of Dr. Begg that the making of this grant to new probationers was discontinued; and on this ground the author of the pamphlet—so an extract in the *Witness* intimates—compares him to the tyrannical Saul, the Man of Sin, the murderous Cain! Now this was only the fine writing of a very young man, and was scarcely worthy of the merciless castigation to which it was subjected. I am sure that Dr. Begg would have been quite willing that it should pass unnoticed. The author of the pamphlet also charged the leading men of the Church with exercising a virtual patronage. But I should think that he could scarcely include Dr. Begg under this indictment, as he was continually protesting against it.

On this subject of the treatment of our probationers I take the liberty of making a statement, although I know that it will expose me to a charge of egotism and self-laudation. Many years ago, but long after the period under review, I was appointed by the General Assembly convener of their Committee on the Distribution of Probationers. I regarded it as my duty to inquire very carefully into the causes of the discontent and sense of wrong which I found to be very prevalent among them. I came to the conclusion that the discontent and the complaints, though they might in some cases be excessive, were far from being groundless. The chief evil was the want of any system for bringing the probationers and vacant congregations into contact with one another. The consequence was that a considerable number of men had had no opportunity of being heard in vacancies, and had attained such an age that the likelihood of their being called had dwindled down to nothing. It grieved me to the heart to be

utterly unable to redress the wrong that had been done to these men, and it often grieves me now to think that some of them must still be suffering under the effects of that wrong. But after two unsuccessful attempts I succeeded in getting an Act of Assembly passed which effectually barred the perpetuation of the wrong. This is the Act under which the supply of vacancies has been regulated ever since, and I think it has given perfect satisfaction both to the probationers and the congregations. I suppose I ought to excise this paragraph, or at least to apologise for letting it stand. But really I have done so little good in the way of ecclesiastical legislation, that I think I am entitled to claim credit for this!

CHAPTER XXXV.

REFORMATION SOCIETY—MODEL LODGING-HOUSES—CLAIM OF RIGHTS—EARLY CLOSING—IMPRISONMENT OF MISS CUNNINGHAM—PAINS AND PRAYER.

At a public meeting of young men in Edinburgh, on the 18th of January 1853, Dr. Begg delivered a speech which might as well have been delivered in January 1887. He referred to the progress of Popery in France, Austria, and other continental states, and even in Protestant Holland. What he said then might have been said in this year of grace 1887. But what would he have said had he lived to see sturdy Bismarck, after bidding stern defiance to Rome, submitting an international dispute to the arbitrament of the Pope, and receiving the decoration of an ecclesiastical order from the hands of "His Holiness"? "Even in Scotland," he went on to say, "where in the remembrance of aged persons a Romish chapel was unknown, and a priest was a curiosity, they now found a number of chapels, a great number of priests, and also nunneries." He then stated his want of confidence in the statesmen of the day, particularising the doings and non-doings of both leaders of the political parties. "As if this were not enough, they had also some of the nominees of Primate Cullen in the Government; and although a great outcry had been raised in Ireland about these men accepting office, and although the whole affair had a very Irish look, they must never forget that the Irish members of the brigade had the support of the bishops and priests, were received with open arms, and that such of them as had

appealed to their constituents had been safely returned. The whole thing put him in mind of what an old farmer said to Sir John Sinclair when he was about to enter Parliament, 'Be aye compleenin', and be aye takin', and be aye sayin' ye haena got eneuch!' In like manner the Pope would, he was afraid, have his representatives in the Government 'aye takin',' while his representatives outside would be 'aye compleenin'.'"

The subject of University Tests was brought before the Presbytery of Edinburgh on the 2d of February by Dr. Candlish, who moved "That the application of the tests to professors elected to non-theological chairs is unjust, delusive, and highly inexpedient; that whatever security may be considered desirable for the character of professors and the soundness of their teaching must be found in some other provision than that of requiring subscription to a creed; and that the Presbytery petition both Houses of Parliament in terms of this resolution." Dr. Begg "seconded the motion with great cordiality, and expressed his very thorough concurrence in all that Dr. Candlish had said." The motion was unanimously agreed to by the Presbytery. A caveat was put in by my revered father, Dr. Davidson of Lady Glenorchy's —one of the few men who were members of the Presbytery then and are members of it now—to the effect that he was not to be regarded as pledged to the declaration that the "desirable security" might not be best found in the imposition of a catholic or non-sectarian creed. It is not necessary to enter upon the discussion now, as the tests were unconditionally abolished long ago. But I must state my conviction that at a later period of his life Dr. Begg would have advocated the provision of the "desirable security" in the Act of abolition.

The Scottish Reformation Society, which had been founded in 1850, mainly to oppose the "Popish aggression," engaged in 1853 Dr. Dill, an Irish Protestant, to come to Scotland as its agent. At the annual meeting of the Society in March

Dr. Dill was introduced by Dr. Begg. The key-note of his speech, and of innumerable speeches of his, was struck in the opening sentences:—

"He need not say a single word in reference to what Popery was, for he supposed all here present were at one in thinking that, considered theologically, it was the Antichrist of Scripture, the deadly enemy of the Gospel of Christ—that, considered politically, it was a great gigantic system of despotism, and the right arm of all the despotisms of Europe—that, considered socially, it was a most complicated curse to any country or neighbourhood in which it prevailed—and that, considered historically, it presented a series of the most fearful degradations of man, and insults to God, which history had ever exhibited. It was more to the purpose at present to reflect on the fact that Popery was not only aggressive, but that it was assuming that attitude avowedly with the determination not to cease until either Protestantism in every form was extinguished over the whole earth, or until Popery was overthrown, which they believed it would be, and that ere long, by the Spirit of God's mouth, and the brightness of His coming."

The same speech contains an exquisite "bit," a cabinet picture such as Dr. Begg could draw with a masterly hand. "He was greatly struck the other day in Glasgow by a sight which perhaps no other country in the world could present. There was a noble champion of Protestantism there among the working classes. He had, he understood, thoroughly mastered the Popish controversy, and he was told that now all the Popish emissaries were glad to flee from him. He occupied a comparatively humble position, that of superintending a small weighing-machine near the Broomielaw. He (Dr. B.) went to see him in his little cabin, for it was little more than that, and he found him working off 1600 cwts. of cotton, uttering the words 'Pass on;' two tons of sugar, 'Pass on,' &c.; and in the intervals between each he was studying one of Cardinal Wiseman's books, which he intended to dissect in the evening. Week after week this

shrewd plain man discussed the Popish controversy to large crowds of the mechanics of Glasgow."[1]

The subject of College Extension was the burning question in the Free Church at this time. It was discussed in the Edinburgh Presbytery in April, in anticipation of the General Assembly in May. It is not necessary to say a word now as to the merits of this controversy, as the Aberdeen Free Church College is now an accomplished fact. Dr. Begg uniformly and consistently advocated its institution. The controversy is now memorable mainly—and sadly—in consequence of the painful alienation between Dr. Cunningham and Dr. Candlish to which it gave occasion, but which was happily healed in a way equally honourable to both of those noble men.

Some dozen years before this an association had been formed in Edinburgh for providing a better class of lodging-houses—Model Lodging-houses, they were called—for travellers and homeless persons of the poorer class. I can testify from personal observation that it prevented an immense amount of evil, and effected not a little positive good The ordinary lodging-houses before that time were simply horrible. I need not say that even the model lodging-houses lack something of the homeliness of home. But in some respects, cleanliness and ventilation, for example, they are far superior to the homes of people of the same class with their occupants. At the annual meeting of the association Dr. Begg moved a resolution, and made an effective speech. His description of the usual non-model lodging-houses of that day is awfully graphic. The following is the main part of it:—

"The best way of seeing these things always is to go personally, and he resolved, along with a friend, to make the run of the lodging-houses of Edinburgh after ten o'clock at night, for the purpose of seeing with his own eyes the actual

[1] I made inquiries in Glasgow regarding this man, and ascertained that he afterwards studied for the ministry.—T. S.

state of things. They had two policemen and two medical men in the party. They began at the Cowgate, and continued their investigations till two o'clock in the morning, going into a great number of lodging-houses; and the general result was to convince them that the state of matters was such as he was quite sure would be incredible in such a city as this, were they not assured of it on authority they could not dispute. In one of the houses, for example, they were told that ten persons had died of cholera. The state of the atmosphere was fearful. The floor was literally littered with human beings. The walls were shelved—for they could not be called beds—each of which was occupied by a human being. In many places there was not even the appearance of a bed. There was simply the bare walls and the floor, which was literally covered with human beings, and it was scarcely possible for them to step across. Dissipation was going on even at a very late hour; and in some places they saw innocent and simple-looking persons from the country, of both sexes, apparently just being dragged into those dens of infamy and ruin. He was perfectly certain that, if any one would pass through that ordeal, they would have no hesitation in maintaining that a more important institution than that about which they were met, did not exist in Edinburgh."

It is important, in order that there may be a correct apprehension of the attitudes which Dr. Begg maintained at successive periods towards the Established Church, to quote at considerable length from the report of his speech, delivered in the General Assembly of 1853, on the subject of the Claim of Rights. The subject was brought before the Assembly by an overture from the Presbytery of Selkirk, asking the Assembly to urge upon the Legislature the reconsideration of that Claim of Rights which had been rejected in 1842.

"Dr. BEGG.— . . . With reference to the question itself now before them, it seemed to him to be divided into two parts. As to the first part, whether it was their duty to do more than they were at present doing for the purpose of impressing their testimony upon the minds of their own people, he was

thoroughly of opinion that more might be done in this direction, and ought to be done, than they were doing at present, and he would most cordially concur in any plan that might suggest itself to the wisdom of the Assembly with this view. He, however, wholly dissented from the idea that the time had come for any such direct appeal to the Legislature as had been suggested; and exceedingly deprecated any such proposal. The two main arguments upon which this proposal had been urged there to-day were, *first*, that the same men who were in power when the Disruption happened were again in power; that these men were understood to have repented, and that they ought to be urged to make a public repentance, instead of merely sending abroad the rumour privately that they had done so. He, however, for one, had no faith in the theory that they had repented at all, in any proper sense. When in the pulpit they were continually making, and rightly making, a distinction between true and false repentance; and he believed that the repentance, if it existed at all, was a mere legal repentance, that was to say, it might be of a kind that had regard to certain consequences that resulted from the course that the Government had pursued, but no sorrow at all for the sin they had committed. He had no idea whatever that these men were now prepared to admit the grand principles for which they of the Free Church struggled, and for which they had become the Disruption Church. . . . The *second* ground which had been urged, viz., that they had now a great front to present to the Government, a vast number of churches, and manses, and schools, a great amount of money to offer them—that went upon the assumption, however, that their people were prepared to go with them, and were prepared to make a present of their churches, manses, and schools to the Government upon their conditions. He believed they would find themselves very much mistaken in that supposition, and that their people looked with extreme jealousy on this movement, and deprecated in the last degree the idea that their offerings were to be made the stepping-stones upon which they were to mount again to the window of the State in order that they might be taken back into the Established Church. He held that this was a most serious question which had been brought before the Assembly, and he trusted it would not be disposed of lightly. For his part he saw in the movement the danger

of losing what they had, by a hopeless and ill-advised attempt to get something else. He had no wish to go back to the Government; and he had ever held since the Disruption, and still held, that the idea of their being reponed in their former position was utterly Utopian. He further held, that if this idea were broached at this moment, it would just have the appearance before the country of presenting this great Assembly, which had been the admiration of the world, standing at the door of the House of Commons with a miserable begging-box in their hands.

"Mr. BANNATYNE.[1]—It was not with a begging-box, but with their noble principles, that they would go to the State.

"Dr. BEGG said he was aware that that was the object of their friends who made that proposal; but he was speaking at present of how the proposal would be looked upon by the country. He believed that people would just understand it to mean this, notwithstanding all that was said by those who proposed it about being disconnected with the State, that they found that the system was not working well, and that they therefore came to Parliament in reality to attempt to get back their glebes and manses, out of which they went ten years ago. They would also make a great schism between themselves and all the other dissenting denominations throughout the country by any such arrangement; and for himself he had no hesitation in stating that any practical movement they made should be in the opposite direction,—that of cultivating a good understanding with the dissenting denominations throughout the country, while, at the same time, maintaining their own principles. (Hear, hear, and cries of Oh, oh.) That was his opinion as an individual member of the Assembly, and he claimed the liberty of stating that openly. This movement was, in his opinion, fraught with danger, and never had the duty of considering well before acting been more incumbent on the Church, unless they wish to damage themselves, and get into a position of inextricable difficulty. He trusted the matter would be fully discussed at an adjourned meeting, but he could not let the Assembly break up at present without uttering an emphatic

[1] Of Cumnock.—T. S.

protest against the course which had been recommended to the Assembly."

Thereupon Dr. Candlish moved the adjournment of the debate, and intimated that, when it was resumed, he would move what may be described as a middle motion.[1] It was to the effect that a pastoral letter should be addressed to the people re-affirming the principles of the Claim of Rights, but intimating that the time contemplated in that document when the granting of it should be urged on the Legislature had not yet come. After full discussion this motion was unanimously adopted.

In order to a right apprehension of the currents of feeling and opinion in the Free Church at that time, and with a view to future reference, it seems proper to introduce here an extract from the speech of Dr. Candlish :—

"I do not sympathise with all that Dr. Begg said ; but I do sympathise very much with him in thinking that it is necessary, in the first place, to be unanimous on this subject in order to be successful, and that the step at present would not be a safe one to take. I ask, thoroughly (*sic*), Can we do it without deranging the relations in which we stand, or ought to stand, to other Christian bodies in the land ? I do say that that is a consideration very materially affecting our present position ; and which, along with other considerations, would now make the question of our return to the State, were it in our power, a very different question from what it would have been in 1842. And more than that, consideration of our relation to other churches, not in our own land only, also very materially affects the question whether we shall go to bear testimony before the magistrate, and what that testimony shall be. For it does not follow that, if we go with a testimony before a magistrate — I am not speaking of going to claim redress, for the time for that is not yet come—but if we go with a testimony to

[1] This expression is not strictly accurate, as Dr. Begg made no formal motion. But his speech was a virtual motion for the rejection of the Selkirk overture.—T. S.

the magistrate we are to limit our testimony to the principles set forth, and the position assumed, in the Claim of Rights and Deed of Protest. Is it not a serious consideration whether, if we go to testify to kings and parliaments, we ought not to testify far more widely, and far more broadly? Is it not manifest that, if we go simply to testify, we go into a position in which we shall be called on to declare various other principles bearing on this matter, besides those contained in the four corners of the Claim of Rights and Protest? At all events, this consideration seems to me of great weight as affecting the question whether we shall or shall not go to testify our principles in the way proposed. I do not think it of importance that we should not of course lower our standard or accommodate our position to meet the views of other bodies in the land;[1] but, at all events, we should take no ultraneous step to rend, more than it is, the rent body of Christ in this land, or to interpose any serious obstacle in the way of different Churches co-operating together, so far as they can see eye to eye. For my part, so far from having any inclination to accommodate our principles and practice to the principles and practice of other non-established Churches in Scotland, I confess to my mind, and, I believe, to the minds of many, the Voluntary principle, as it is called, has come out since the Disruption as an infinitely worse thing than we ever thought it looked before the Disruption. I thoroughly feel that I have got more insight since the Disruption, within the last ten years, into the falsehoods in principle, and mischief in practice, of the Voluntary doctrine, than we ever had before. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact, that in all those great questions now agitating the public mind, and affecting the social and religious welfare of the people—such, for example, as the protection of the Sabbath, the protection of the purity of the marriage law, the putting down of endowments to Popery, and many others—this Voluntary principle always comes in between our friends and a fair consideration of the question before them, insomuch that it very often seems they cannot get to the consideration of the matter, whether, for example, it is right

[1] There is here manifestly an error in the reporting. The speaker's meaning evidently was that he did not think it [our relation to other churches] so important that it should induce us to lower our standard, &c.—T. S.

or wrong that the State should sanction marriages such as are now sought to be sanctioned, or whether it is right or wrong that the State should protect the Sabbath, as we ask, giving all freedom to worship God according to the conscience. We can scarcely get them to look at any one of these questions except through this medium, before they are satisfied how it bears on their Voluntary principles. Now, I have found repeatedly that this has come in the way of a cordial and hearty co-operation with our friends on these public questions; but, I am thankful to say, I believe this evil is in the course of being diminished."

These extracts, thus placed side by side, seem to make it evident that, at this time, while Dr. Begg and Dr. Candlish were both strenuous advocates of an Established Church rightly constituted, and were both opposed to Voluntaryism, the former was more disposed than the latter to seek for the maintenance of friendly relations with those who held by the Voluntary principle. If we shall find that it was otherwise at a later period, we shall have to endeavour to investigate the causes of the change.

I have already adverted to the proposed checks on the equal dividend. These checks assumed a considerably modified form as proposed to this Assembly. But, even as modified, they were strenuously opposed by Dr. Begg, but were carried by a large majority (176—67).

A somewhat painful matter occurred at a meeting held in Edinburgh in September on the subject of early shop-shutting. Professor Miller advocated a Saturday half-holiday, on the ground that it would lead to a better observance of the Sabbath; and Dr. Begg, in the course of his speech, said, "The community could mark those men who would not close their places of business at the hour agreed upon, and could resolve that they would not enter their places of business after the hour when the others had shut." Surely the "meanest capacity" will perceive that what was thus recommended was a very different thing from what has now come

to be called "boycotting." The chairman, however, Sheriff Gordon, who certainly was not a man of weak capacity, seems to have confounded them. He said, "In the first place, then, I say that such a threat as was held out, of withholding dealing from certain people because they differed in opinion from us, is a sentiment that, as an individual ——" Before he had finished the sentence, Dr. Begg said, "I rise to explain. I beg to state that I said nothing of the kind. I did not propose to withhold trade from individuals because they differed from us in opinion. I did not propose to withhold trade from those individuals during the hours which the community thought were the proper hours of business. I simply proposed that if after these hours of business places were kept open, the community, in the exercise of their own liberty, might and ought not to go into these places, or any places, after the hours which were fixed upon as proper hours during which business should be carried on." With a good deal of blustering the Sheriff stated that he was not satisfied with this explanation. He then adverted to Professor Miller's view of Sabbath observance, and left the chair, to which, however, he almost immediately returned.

As was not unusual with him, Dr. Begg carried out his advocacy of the Saturday half-holiday in a letter to the *Witness*. In it, amidst many weighty things, he says: "The earlier class of Protestant ministers, including the Reformers, were sensitively alive to the connection between things temporal and spiritual. But we have passed through a cold period since, and a mawkish notion of spirituality has led many of our modern ministers to stand aloof from all such movements, and allow the people to be gradually enslaved. This, again, is naturally breaking out in a contempt for religion itself, and a profanation of the day of rest. Nothing would tend more to 'sweeten the breath of society,' and protect the day of God, than for every minister at present to throw his influence in favour of the Saturday half-holiday, and all

similar wholesome movements on the part of the working classes." Then without any direct reference to Sheriff Gordon, he repeats his advice to all persons to refrain from making purchases after the hour that might be agreed upon as the proper Saturday's closing hour.

In the October meeting of the Presbytery of Edinburgh Dr. Begg proposed two overtures, bearing on what he considered to be the tendency of the Assembly to legislate without compliance with the terms of the Barrier Act. The one was carried by a majority, and the other, with a modification suggested by Dr. Candlish, and accepted by Dr. Begg, was passed unanimously.

About this time a good deal of excitement was produced by the imprisonment, at Florence, of a Scotch lady, Miss Cunningham of Thorntoun (I believe, in Ayrshire), on a charge of distributing Protestant tracts. Public meetings were held in many places, and memorials were adopted, urging the Government to demand her immediate release. There is no doubt that there is great delicacy required in dealing with matters of international law. It must be admitted that foreigners voluntarily passing through, or taking up their residence in, other countries, must submit to the laws of these countries, however different they may be from those of their own country. This, of course, is the general principle. But yet there may be cases so flagrant that a Government may be bound to demand the cessation of wrong inflicted on its subjects. It is doubly to be regretted when such a demand has to be made by a strong power, like Britain, of a weak one like the Grand Duke of Tuscany. It is scarcely possible in such case to avoid the appearance of blustering. Still even this must sometimes be faced. And it certainly seems that Miss Cunningham's was a bad case, and that she was being punished ostensibly because she had violated the Tuscan law, but that her punishment was made more severe through hatred of her country and her faith. At

a public meeting held in Edinburgh with the view of insisting on her release, Dr. Begg was one of the speakers. The conclusion of his speech was characteristic. "It was well, however," he said, "that these events were occurring. They were dispelling the foolish credulity of ignorant Protestants. The Divine descriptions of Rome, which some were forgetting, were being written again legibly before Europe on the doors of these Tuscan dungeons; and although the modern Jezebel was sitting aloft in her sacrilegious pride, tiring her head, and painting her old and haggard face to deceive the nations, her deeds were proclaiming her bloody and incurable enmity to God, and preparing all Europe to shout for joy when she shall speedily be cast down to perdition, and her blasphemous cruelties shall be brought to a perpetual end." It should be stated that within a few days Miss Cunningham was liberated, "owing her release to the exertions of Mr. Scarlett, acting under the instructions of Lord Clarendon." Indeed, I am not sure that the release did not take place on the day on which the meeting was held. It was either on that day, or so soon after, that no share of the credit of it can be claimed for our Edinburgh oratory.

In the year 1853 the country was visited by the cholera epidemic. A movement for setting apart a day for humiliation and prayer called forth much discussion, in which a flippant letter by Lord Palmerston held a prominent place. It was positively asserted on one side that prayer and humiliation were of no use; and that all that was wanted was the adoption of sanatory measures. The subject was introduced into the Free Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale by Dr. Tweedie, who proposed an overture on the subject in admirable terms. Dr. Davidson, in seconding the proposal, suggested that there should be introduced some reference to sanatory measures, in order that "those without might be prevented from saying that Christians are indifferent to such measures." Dr. Begg concurred heartily in this suggestion, and brought his

unconscious Baconianism to bear upon the elucidation of the perfect compatibility of prayer and the use of means—what the good John Elliot called "pains and prayer." The following passage is worthy of preservation :—

"On the one hand, they should not neglect the use of physical means, and he would be the last man to allege that there ought to be any neglect or disregard of these. In fact, he thought that those who were admonishing others to look to these were the principal parties who ought to look to them; and it seemed that they were not looking after it as they ought to do, for they were only cleansing the outside of the cup and the platter—whitewashing walls and closes —whilst pestilential masses of filth were festering inside and under foot. *They* were the parties who ought to look to this, and instead of writing glib letters they ought to do it. This was their proper business. But, on the other hand, it became them, being rulers of a great nation, to acknowledge the hand of Him who was King of nations; and he thought it was a melancholy symptom, in connection with the present state of their affairs, to find that there should be the least hesitation on the part of their rulers to acknowledge the hand of God. But if we could not persuade them to call upon the people to discharge their duty in the matter, we were bound ourselves to acknowledge the Divine hand; and inasmuch as God appeared at present to be arresting the progress of this great evil, although there were reports that it was spreading in some of their own cities, he trusted that the forbearance of God would be acknowledged, inasmuch as they knew that insensibility to His judgments was the sure way to provoke His anger, whilst the acknowledgment of the kindness of God in abating judgment was one of the ways by which judgment may be averted."

In the Presbytery, in November, the subject of National Education was considered. The most notable feature in the discussion was that it evinced perfect concord between Dr. Candlish and Dr. Begg on this great question. Dr. Guthrie good-naturedly twitted Dr. Candlish with having made some approach to agreement with his views and those of Dr. Begg.

Dr. Candlish as good-naturedly repudiated the "soft impeachment." It is true that the point of disagreement—as to the mode whereby religious instruction was to be secured—was not directly before the Presbytery, and was introduced only incidentally,—Dr. Begg and Dr. Guthrie repeating their frequent statements that they would rather commit the matter to the arbitrament of the people of Scotland than have it discussed in Parliament, where a proposal for a statutory requirement of religious instruction would probably be met by a proposal for its statutory exclusion. It is true that Dr. Candlish's motion sought for such a national system "as shall, moreover, on the other hand, secure the giving of religious instruction in the parish schools, and all other schools to be recognised as national, in the manner hitherto in use in the said parish schools;" but in his speech he stated that he did not mean to commit the Presbytery as to the character of the security that ought to be required. He seemed to intimate that he would be content that the matter should be left to the option of the people, but for his fear that that would introduce wrangling and contention into the local boards.

At the November Commission, Dr. Tweedie made a statement, on behalf of his committee, on the subject of Popery; especially with reference to a new code which had been prepared for adoption in Malta, with the sanction of the Romanist Governor, Mr. More O'Ferral, and which contained clauses of so persecuting a character that they could not have been legislatively enacted even in Naples. Dr. Begg spoke strongly on this subject and on the whole Romish question. Shortly after, he gave a lecture on Popery in Glasgow; went to London on the work of the Scottish Reformation Society; and in the last week of the year attended and spoke at the annual meeting of the Society in Edinburgh. "It is good to be always zealously affected in a good cause."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MINISTERIAL TRAINING.—ROMANIST CHAPLAINS.—THE "ROCK."—ABERDEEN COLLEGE.—PASTORAL DILIGENCE.

ALTHOUGH the General Assembly had introduced in substance, though with considerable modifications, the rating system against which Dr. Begg had so vigorously contended while it was under consideration, and although he was, of course, bound to submit to the decision of the Assembly, he had still fault to find with the way in which the decision of the Assembly was applied by the Sustentation Fund Committee. He accordingly moved in the Presbytery the transmission of an overture, which really came not far short of a vote of censure upon the committee. After a keen discussion, he withdrew the overture on the recommendation of Dr. Cunningham.

At the same meeting of Presbytery, Dr. Candlish introduced an overture for the repeal of an Act of 1848, which required that no probationer should be allowed to accept a call until he had been licensed for a year. This was a subject on which Dr. Begg always felt keenly; and, therefore, "he objected to the overture, inasmuch as it would remove their opportunities of acquiring practical experience previous to ordination, which the Act of 1848 was intended to supply." "A man," said he, "was not even trained to be a shoemaker in the manner in which they trained a minister. A lecture on shoemaking would never enlighten a man in the mysteries of that craft, till he regularly sat down to his last and his leather. A practical training took place in the case of doctors and lawyers; and in like manner, he thought, pro-

bationers might be advantageously employed as assistants in large cities for some time before ordination." "The overture was transmitted, on an understanding with Dr. Candlish that Dr. Begg should give notice of another overture for next meeting on the subject referred to. Dr. Candlish said he thoroughly approved of Dr. Begg's suggestion." In due time Dr. Begg embodied his suggestion in the following overture:—"That the Assembly, in connection with the proposed abolition of the year's probation for licentiates, should consider whether some effectual plan could not be adopted for communicating to the licentiates, during the course of their other instructions, a thorough practical training in the actual work which they would be called upon to perform as pastors of congregations or as missionaries." He supported the overture by his favourite analogy of the training of shoemakers and tailors; and, after a good deal of conversation, the transmission of the overture was unanimously agreed to.

As the subject is one of permanent interest and importance, I think it ought to be said that, in my humble opinion, Dr. Begg was unconsciously misled to a certain extent by his analogy. The art of the shoemaker has a unity appertaining to it, which does not belong to any department of the pastoral or evangelistic work. The shoemaker's apprentice has to set before himself no other object than that of producing an exact copy of the pattern furnished to him; any deviation from this is a fault. But it is quite otherwise with all the departments of ministerial work, and indeed, with all work which is mental and not mechanical. In preaching, for example, or in pastoral visiting, we are not able, and we are not entitled if we were able, to reproduce a mere copy of the performance of any other preacher or visitor. Our own mind, and our heart, wrought upon and energised by the Spirit of God, is to do the work; and the attempt to make our mind and heart run in the groove in which those of another have run, will necessarily result in ridiculous and inefficient imita-

tion. And then, if the analogy were stricter than it appears to me to be, the question remains as to the possibility of its application. I do not know precisely the steps of the process by which the shoemaker's apprentice is gradually led up to proficiency in his art. But I presume that it is by some application or other of the maxim, *Fiat experimentum in corpore vili.* But then in our case there is no *corpus vile.* If the untrained student is to preach to our congregations, the result will be quite as bad as that which follows the preaching of the untrained licentiate. I suspect that, from the very nature of the case, there must always be a period of inexperience. The riddle of the Sphynx is as true now as it ever was. We must all creep ere we can walk. What I chiefly fear is, that we may possibly give countenance to the idea that anything can compensate the student for the neglect of honest, earnest, laborious study.

As to the actual proposal in Dr. Begg's overture, I do not think that either that Assembly, or any subsequent Assembly, did "adopt" any "effectual plan for communicating a thorough practical training" in pastoral or evangelistic work. Our theological professors do, probably, all that can be done with a view to this end, and I suspect that we must just submit to the Baconian necessity of conquering nature only by obeying her, and not attempt the solution of the insoluble problem of making men experienced without going through the process of acquiring experience.

At this time the public mind was much exercised as to the appointment and payment of Romanist chaplains for jails, and Dr. Begg, of course, took a leading part in the discussion of the question. He brought the subject forward in the Presbytery, and proposed that a memorial should be sent to the Government on the subject. In his speech he took his usual ground, and had his favourite argument, which it is much easier to laugh at than to refute, that, according to the teaching of Liguori and other doctors of high authority in

the Romish Church, there are many cases in which stealing is no sin, and some in which it is a duty. Are you then to pay for training men (as in Maynooth) to teach this to the people, and then to pay them for carrying further in the same direction the education of those whom they have already initiated in crime? The memorial proposed by Dr. Begg was unanimously adopted by the Presbytery.

On this subject of Popish endowments a great conference of "the Protestants of Scotland" was held in Edinburgh in the month of February 1854. Dr. Begg was the first speaker, and I suppose that he was the prime mover in the "getting up" of the goodly gathering. The conclusion of his speech was as follows:—

"We are assembled here from all parts of Scotland to take all these things into consideration, to consider the whole steps which have led to the last proposal—that of endowing Popish chaplains in the jails of the kingdom—and bringing it to bear as with a thunder-clap on the doors of St. Stephen's, so that statesmen may not be able to say, if they presume to say it now, that they are doing those things in ignorance of the feelings of the country. We are met on a large platform. I rejoice in the breadth of this platform. We are now met on the very ground of the Reformation, anterior to all the sects into which we are now divided. We are met on the grounds on which our Reformers met; and it is a more remarkable meeting, I will venture to say, than any that has been in Scotland since the days of the Reformers. It is easy to answer all the scriptural arguments of Rome, but to meet the policy of Rome is a very different matter. Rome professes to be a religion; but she is nothing else than a banded conspiracy against the rights of God and the liberties of men. And we meet here like men of intelligence, who know the times, to consider what Israel ought to do. We may not be able to arrest the suicidal policy of our rulers, but we can do our duty, and show ourselves worthy of the heroic men from whom we are descended; and at all events, as we stand on the very threshold of those great events which are to sweep that conspiracy from the face of the earth, we can at least

endeavour to save ourselves by lifting up a loud protest against the evils which we may not be able to arrest."

Out of this meeting sprang one of the most painful incidents of Dr. Begg's life, which I must not altogether pass over. It befel in this wise. Dr. Dill, secretary of the Scottish Reformation Society, in the course of his speech, took occasion to lament the apathy of the periodical press on the subject of Popery. "After touching upon the importance of enlightening the country on the subject of Popery by sermons, lectures, prayer-meetings, the press, which in this country he thought had not done its duty, he said, the press of Scotland did not seem to feel the obligations under which they lay to the Reformation;[1] and apparently did not remember that but for Protestantism the press would not have existed at all; and he trusted that feelings of gratitude, as well as a sense of what was right in itself, would make them do their duty more faithfully in this respect. But they must have a paper of their own; the cause had lagged fearfully behind for want of one. He believed that, without a press to report them, and keep them constantly before the country, they never would succeed in the enterprise in which they were engaged." It was quite well known before this that arrangements were in progress for starting a weekly newspaper whose distinctive characteristic should be anti-popery. But this was the first public intimation of the proposal. The wrath of the editor of the *Witness* was roused, and he came forth with a terrific leader, assailing with argument, sarcasm, and personal disparagement Dr. Dill and Dr. Begg, whom he knew to be the leader of the movement. An angry controversy ensued. Dr. Begg reminded Mr. Miller of the numerous contributions which he had made to the columns of the *Witness*. Mr. Miller replied that some of these contributions had been valuable, but that most of them he had accepted, in opposition to his judgment, because he did not wish to hurt the feelings

[1] Dr. Dill afterwards wrote to the *Witness* that he stated there were exceptions.—T. S.

of their author. He also taunted Dr. Begg with accepting a salary as editor of the *Bulwark*. But worst of all, he charged him with dishonourable conduct in tampering through his publisher with the chief clerk in the *Witness* office, offering him a larger salary if he would cast in his lot with the new venture. To this the publisher replied that no overture was made to the clerk until he had made it notorious that he was only remaining in the *Witness* office until he could get other employment with more adequate remuneration. An angry controversy ensued, and those who had hitherto been, and who ought to have continued to be, fast friends, were tempted to regard each other as enemies. The biographer of Miller of course represents him as altogether in the right, and his opponent as altogether in the wrong, and rejoices that he was at last enabled to throw off the incubus of the "no-popery" party, which, according to him, had all along been borne with difficulty by the *Witness* and its editor.

As to the merits of the controversy, it is happily not necessary to speak now at any length. If Dr. Dill made, as originally reported, an indiscriminate charge of apathy against the Scottish newspaper press, the editor of the *Witness* might well be offended; and he had unsheathed his sharp sword before the explanation or correction was given. So also if negotiations had been entered upon with his confidential clerk in order to induce him to enter a rival's service, he might well feel aggrieved. But the aspect of affairs was very materially changed, when it was made known that these negotiations were entered on in connection with the avowed intention of the clerk to quit his service.[1] Altogether I regret Mr. Miller's action, rather than blame him for it. That action was an abnormal outbreak of those noble powers and generous feelings which made him what he was, the most powerful champion of a good cause.

[1] In point of fact the clerk had left the *Witness* office, and had accepted a situation in London, before the statement was made as to the dealings of Dr. Begg and Mr. Nichol with him.—T. S.

As to the proposal to establish a newspaper specially in the interests of Protestantism, there may well be doubts as to its expediency on the ground of the uncertainty of its success. But I fail to see that the editor of the *Witness* had any reason to complain of it. His paper had been founded and conducted as a Free Church paper; and although his admirable writing on scientific and social subjects must have attracted a considerable number of readers from outside of the Free Church, yet undoubtedly the great body of its subscribers were Free Churchmen. But it was desired to enlist in the anti-popery campaign not Free Churchmen alone, but all Protestants, members of those bodies against whose systems the *Witness* was waging effective war, the Established Churchmen, the Voluntaries, and the Episcopalians. Happily the alienation which this controversy could not fail to produce between Begg and Miller was but temporary. They were men of whom each respected and admired the other. They were men of a temper

> "Which carries anger as the flint bears fire;
> Which, much enforced, shows a hasty spark
> And straight is cool again."

Wisely or unwisely the new paper was founded under the name of the *Rock*. It had for a time a fair measure of success, but came to an end after the publication of its thirty-ninth number. I believe that Dr. Dill was its editor; and I have no doubt that Dr. Begg was a frequent contributor. It is now before me; but I have no means of ascertaining what articles were from his pen.

The controversy on the subject of College Extension still went on, Dr. Cunningham consistently opposing, and Dr. Begg consistently advocating, the institution of a Theological College at Aberdeen. But in fact it was virtually instituted before this time, the only question that really remained being as to the scale on which it was to be founded, and the extent which it was to attain. Although Dr. Begg opposed Dr. Cunningham on this question, which he deemed one of the

most vital importance, I find no trace of any suspension of the cordial amity which subsisted betwixt these life-long friends. Dr. Begg was not a member of the Assembly of 1854, and so had no opportunity of taking part in the discussion of this and other important matters that came before it—such as National Education and the Sustentation Fund; but he took his full share in the discussion of these in the inferior courts.

Having said so much, and having still so much to say as to Dr. Begg's actings as a public man, this may be as proper a place as any for the interjection of a *caveat*, a sense of the necessity for which has been growing upon me. It must not be supposed that, either at this or any other time, Dr. Begg was merely an ecclesiastic. As to his personal and family life, I have no wish to say much if I had means of knowing much; and such means I have not, simply because his private life was, by God's blessing on him and his, most happily uneventful; and not very different was what I may call his pastoral life. In his pulpit preparation and in his pastoral labours he was steady and conscientious. With a vigorous physique, he did not, until a much later period of his life, find it necessary to interrupt these labours by such holidays as are probably indispensable to feebler men. I have often heard him humorously, and somewhat sarcastically, comment on the advertisements which now appear every Saturday morning, intimating that this and that minister is to conduct the services in his own church on the following day. "I think," he would say, "it ought to be taken for granted that I am doing my duty, without my paying for an advertisement to tell the world that on some particular day—as if that were a remarkable and exceptional phenomenon—I mean to do it!" It should be emphasised that no number of ecclesiastical engagements interfered with his family and social and pastoral duties. Indeed, it may be said that the only period of his life in which there was a tendency to allow such encroachment was during his Liberton ministry before the Disruption.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A CRITICAL PERIOD IN THE FREE CHURCH—RELATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT—VIEWS OF POPERY.

THE period which we have now been reviewing was certainly a painful one in the history of the Free Church. There was apparently no declension of zeal, the zeal which, by the blessing of God, had accomplished marvellous results in the provision and maintenance of the means of grace for a great portion of the people of Scotland, and had excited the wonder and called forth the thanksgivings of many members of other Churches in our own and other lands. This zeal remained unimpaired, but when the work was in considerable measure effected which for a time had afforded it blessed exercise, there was a danger of its being less happily employed. This danger the Church did not altogether escape. Very much as the Sacramentarian controversy broke out among the Continental reformers, and controversies about vestments and ritual among the reformers of England, did questions arise which ranged in opposite camps those who had been fellow-workers and fellow-soldiers but a few years before. I have already had occasion to refer to the chief of these questions—the distribution of the Sustentation Fund, the institution of the Aberdeen College, the relation which the Church ought to assume to National Education, and the mode in which the war with Rome could best be waged. In the midst of much that is painful in these controversies, there is one redeeming feature. There is no appearance of partisanship in the conduct of them. Dr. Begg and Dr. Candlish were on the same side on the College question; on opposite sides on that relating to Sustentation.

Of the supporters of Dr. Robert Buchanan and the opponents of Dr. Begg on the latter subject, no one was stronger than Dr. James Gibson. He and Dr. Begg might be regarded as the chief leaders on the two sides regarding National Education, while Dr. Candlish generally agreed with Dr. Gibson, but did not go quite so far as he. In the Popish controversy I have had to allude, and have done it with deep regret, to the misunderstanding which ensued between Dr. Begg and the editor of the *Witness*, who on most of the other questions were in cordial agreement.

So much of light might have been seen breaking through what, it must be confessed, was a dark cloud. Looking back to that time we can see more than this. We can see that on this and subsequent occasions a cloud was dissipated when it seemed ready to break, and the sunshine of peace and prosperity made the landscape smile. And so it will be, so long as the Free Church is true to her principles, and does with her might what her hand findeth to do. She has nothing to fear from any persons or powers that may be arrayed against her. As one said regarding another Church, "If she is to die, it will be by suicide." The position which she occupied just after the Disruption was a critical one. Blessed as an instrument to do a great work, with her bitterest foes constrained to acknowledge her success, either with admiration or with jealousy; her temptation was "to sacrifice to her own net, and burn incense to her own drag," and so to forfeit her share in the blessing of Him who honoureth those who honour Him. Probably her strongest temptation now is to sacrifice principle on the altar of seeming expediency, and to court popular applause by the relinquishment of high principle. If to this temptation she yield—which God forbid—the chisel is ready to grave deep upon her walls the *Ichabod* of her doom.

As indicating the imperfect consolidation of Free Church views, I may notice a very small controversy which was

carried on in the Presbytery of Edinburgh on the 3d of January 1855. It was the time of the Crimean war, and the Government appointed a Free Church probationer, the Rev. R. B. Watson, as one of the Presbyterian chaplains to the troops in the Crimea, "upon the same footing and salary as other chaplains," and the Presbytery of Edinburgh were asked to ordain him to the office. Dr. Begg demurred to this. He had, of course, nothing but what was good to say of Mr. Watson, who even then stood, as he does now, high in the esteem and affection of all who knew him. But he doubted whether a Free Church minister could consistently accept Government pay, because thereby the protest of the Free Church would be compromised. He seems to have stood alone in the Presbytery, Dr. Guthrie characterising his views as "Free Churchism run mad." Differing entirely from Dr. Begg, and indeed having myself been, for a short time, a military chaplain on precisely the same footing with Mr. Watson, I yet cannot make light of the solicitude manifested by my friend to resist the beginnings of evil. It was zeal in the right direction, though it might go too far in that direction. What makes so small a matter worthy of notice at all is, that it is indicative of the fact which we have had occasion to notice more than once before, that at this time Dr. Begg belonged to the section of the Free Church which stood nearest to Voluntaryism. He was as far as ever from making light of the duty of States and their rulers towards the truth and the Church of God. But he went further than most of his brethren in estimating the danger which the Church incurs in accepting endowments at the hand of Government.

In connection with this action occasion was taken by some anonymous writers to make spiteful attacks on Dr. Begg as co-operating with ministers of the Established Church in the Scottish Reformation Society, and as receiving a salary as editor of the *Bulwark*. With painful regret I state that the

editor of the *Witness* not only gave insertion to those personal attacks, but allowed one or two paragraphs of a similar character to appear in the editorial columns. These paragraphs I am sure that he did not write, and they may perhaps have been inserted without his knowledge, or *per incuriam*. But Dr. Begg's respect for, and admiration of, Hugh Miller, were too deep-rooted to be affected by these attacks. Very often in after years he spoke with fervent admiration of that wonderful man, and I am very sure that the last drop of bitterness departed from his heart in the hour when he heard that that strong brain and that warm heart and that stalwart arm had done with their work in this world. Among the thousands of mourners who were saddened and solemnised by the tidings of Miller's sudden fate, I am sure there was not one—apart from his own family and a very small inner circle of personal friends—who mourned more sincerely than did Dr. Begg.

It was in the autumn of 1855 that Dr. Begg propounded the formation of an institution, with which thenceforth he was very closely connected—the Protestant Institute of Scotland. In one sense it was a transformation of that "Irish Mission" that we wot of. M'Menamy's race was run. Dr. Begg believed in him to the last and "against hope believed in hope." But it would not do. With intensest sorrow he had to confess that he and many others had been deceived. Yet the mystery remained—and remains to this day—how the success which undoubtedly had attended his labours had been achieved. Dr. Begg proposed to the Edinburgh Presbytery the formation of a Protestant Institute with a constitution almost identical with that which was eventually given it. In the last month of the year Victor Emmanuel, King of Sardinia, visited this country, and a public meeting was held for the purpose of presenting him with an address of welcome. The meeting was attended by a great number of the most zealous anti-Romanists and

friends of the Waldenses. The principal speaker was Dr. Candlish; and upon Dr. Begg devolved the honourable task of proposing the address which had been prepared.

It is likely that this address, which was proposed by Dr. Begg, was also written by him. At all events it expresses the sentiments which he always held, and which he often expressed, regarding the Waldenses, and regarding "the unaltered intolerance of the papal system." Next to the Scottish Covenanters, the Waldenses occupied the highest place as objects of his sympathy and admiration. His knowledge of poetry was limited, and excepting the Scottish Psalms and a few trite passages from Burns, he seldom or never ventured on a poetical quotation in his speech. But I have repeatedly heard him, in the course of conversation, repeat with intense feeling a portion of Milton's grand sonnet:—

> "Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
> Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
> Even them who kept Thy truth so pure of old,
> When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,
> Forget not: in Thy book record their groans
> Who were Thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
> Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled
> Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
> The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
> To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow
> O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
> The triple tyrant; that from these may grow
> A hundred fold, who, having learned Thy way,
> Early may shun the Babylonian woe."

This might have been the text of many an appeal made by Dr. Begg. He never could be persuaded that Popery was aught else than Popery, but believed that it would yet doff its disguise of liberality, and substitute for its claim of toleration a stern demand for supremacy. Alas! that his warnings were disregarded by many, or treated with either ridicule or scorn. Had not his predictions met with a reception such as befel

those of Cassandra, it had been better for us to-day; there had been better hopes for our children who are to come after us. The disregard, the ridicule, and the scorn became more and more common. One or other of them was often exhibited by men of whom better things might have been expected; some of those who felt in sympathy with him lacked courage to stand by an unpopular cause; and so Dr. Begg came to be regarded as the leader of a small body of very narrow-minded bigots. I speak, of course, of Scotland. There were English and Irish Protestants who had understanding of the times, and there were in Scotland individuals and faithful ministers of the Gospel who were alive to the truth. But the great body of the Scottish people boasted of Knox and the thoroughness of the Reformation, and of the great intelligence of the national mind, and opined that Popery could never make progress in Scotland. Meantime Rome was content to "bide her time," and watch for one opportunity after another, confident in her power to profit by all events, however adverse to her interests might be their seeming. It ought to be stated, however, for the prevention of possible misapprehension, that the anti-Romanist zeal of the men who might be regarded as the leaders of the Free Church remained unabated. It was impossible that men like Cunningham and Candlish, and Tweedie and Guthrie, could ever be ignorant of, or indifferent to, the devices of Rome.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

PROTESTANT INSTITUTE—SABBATH OBSERVANCE—REPRESENTATION IN THE ASSEMBLY—NATIONAL EDUCATION—WORKING CLASSES—SATURDAY EVENING CONCERTS.

I HAVE not attempted to follow chronologically the "outs and ins" of the Irish Mission, nor do I propose to do so now. It is enough to state generally that at the first the Presbytery were at one in supporting MacMenamy. I do not know that Dr. Begg was by any means his most ardent supporter. But when the character of MacMenamy began to be known, the Presbytery ceased to support or control his Mission, but continued operations in several districts in Edinburgh. Dr. Begg, as I have stated more than once, continued to believe in MacMenamy till belief was impossible, and with the help of like-minded friends, supported him for a time. But at the beginning of 1856 the Presbytery resolved to discontinue their Irish Mission, and to support the Protestant Institute, which Dr. Begg had projected, and which was now beginning to take form and substance. The report of the Committee of Presbytery, recommending the cessation of the Irish Mission, was given in by Dr. Candlish, and Dr. Begg moved the approval of it, saying that "he entirely concurred in every word that had fallen from Dr. Candlish; and instead of thinking that there was any discouragement connected with the result to which the committee had come, he for one thought that it was extremely satisfactory, at least in this respect, that the Presbytery had been brought into most entire unanimity in reference to their future operations in that department of labour."

There was a subject in which Dr. Begg took as warm and continuous an interest as he did in the opposition to Romanism. That was the subject of Sabbath observance. But with this difference. On the Romanist question, Dr. Begg was the acknowledged leader; on the Sabbath question, that honour belonged of right to his friend and mine, Dr. Davidson of Glenorchy's. In all the church courts, from Assembly to kirk-session, and in the press and on the platform, Dr. Davidson was present in the fight. But Dr. Begg gave no half-hearted support to his leader in a cause which he regarded as second to none in its bearing on the honour of God and the wellbeing of man. On the 21st of February 1856, Sir Joshua Walmesley, in the House of Commons, moved a resolution in favour of opening the British Museum and the National Gallery on the Lord's Day. The question was debated at great length and with great ability, two future Lord Chancellors (Cairns and Roundell Palmer) maintaining a noble stand for the sanctity of the Sabbath. The resolution was negatived by a majority of 328 (376–48). Dr. Davidson reported this to the Presbytery, and moved the adoption of a memorial to the Queen, praying for the discontinuance of the musical performance in the Kensington Gardens on the Sabbath. Dr. Begg seconded the motion. There is nothing of very special importance in his speech, yet I think it well to give it, as a specimen of the thoroughly practical way in which he universally treated such subjects:—

"Dr. Begg, in seconding the motion, said, that while he concurred generally in what had been stated as to the prevalence of loose views and statements, he was, at the same time, gratified as an individual, in reading the debates, to discover what he thought was a considerable advance in right views on the part of members of the House of Commons in reference to the Sabbath. It was also gratifying to find that, in the minority of 48 on that occasion, 22 were Roman Catholics, and that none were Scotch members. At the same time there was one peculiarity in the division, in reference

to Scotland, in which they had an interest, viz., that the members in this neighbourhood seemed to have been all absent, with one single exception. The members for East Lothian, the Haddington burghs, Mid-Lothian, the Leith district of burghs, Fife, and the Kirkcaldy district of burghs, and one of the members for Edinburgh, were all absent. The only vote from this part of Scotland was that of Mr. Black, and it was on the right side; very much, he thought, to his honour. He had no doubt that there might be some explanation in reference to some of those parties. The advance which had taken place in right views ought to induce them to persevere in the diffusion of sound principles on this and other questions amongst the community."

At the meeting of the Edinburgh Presbytery in March, Dr. Begg moved the transmission to the Assembly of two overtures, both of which were adopted unanimously by the Presbytery. The one was as to the distribution of the "Supplementary Sustentation Fund" and the "Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund," the other as to fire insurance on ecclesiastical buildings. This latter subject was frequently discussed while there was a heavy duty on fire insurance. I believe it was found that if a body like the Free Church undertook the insurance of buildings which did not belong to it as a body, but to the several congregations, it would have been regarded as an insurance society, and the duty would have been claimed; while the rates actually charged by the offices, apart from this duty, were by no means excessive. It was quite in accordance with Dr. Begg's turn of mind to advocate that the Church should be its own insurer. I suspect it will be generally found that these matters of business are best left to be conducted by men of business, on the principles and by the methods applicable to the conduct of other secular business.

On the 28th of March, a very long and keen discussion ensued in the Presbytery on an overture proposed by Dr. Guthrie as to the Sustentation Fund. Dr. Begg spoke in

support of the overture, which was, in form, only a proposal for inquiry, and a demand that no change should be made in the collection or distribution of the fund without previous ascertainment of the mind of the Church regarding it. There is no occasion for giving any account of the matter of this speech. I shall content myself with a few characteristic sentences.

"Mr. ——'s arguments were extremely irrelevant, unless, indeed, it were to be supposed that his speech had been made before the facts which had been adverted to had come out."

"If it were thus to be presumed that in making an inquiry any man was insulted, or his position compromised, there would be a complete end to freedom of discussion and investigation in the Church."

"A man might differ from every man in the Church besides; and he himself claimed that liberty, which he held was one of their glories as a Presbyterian, and, above all, as a Free Church."

When the representatives of the Presbytery in the General Assembly came to be elected, Dr. Begg introduced a proposal of great moment, to the effect that the clerical members should, in ordinary circumstances, be sent in rotation. This may seem a small matter, but it is not so. Undoubtedly the law of the Church is that members of Assembly be *elected* by the Presbyteries, and it is right that it should be so, for there do occasionally occur circumstances in which it is necessary, or at least very desirable, that a particular man should be in the Assembly. For example, in that very year, 1856, Dr. M'Crie, a member of the Edinburgh Presbytery, was designated for election to the Moderatorship of the Assembly, and Dr. Begg most heartily concurred in the proposal that he should be elected. But all through the history of the Church it had been the understanding that, in ordinary circumstances, members should be sent in rotation. In the extra-

ordinary circumstances of the Disruption, this practice had, perhaps properly, been departed from, and certain members were returned to almost every Assembly. But these special circumstances had passed away; yet in most of the larger Presbyteries the practice had continued of returning some of the members out of their regular order. In point of fact, certain ministers were members of every Assembly. This practice Dr. Begg, Dr. Cunningham, and others strenuously opposed, and Dr. Cunningham, at the meeting of Presbytery now under notice, refused absolutely to be sent out of his turn. Dr. Begg in his speech dwelt on the many evils of the plan. It led to the throwing the business of the Assembly into the hands of a few men. It led to the diminution of a sense of responsibility on the part of the younger members. In fact, it converted what ought to have been a republican into an oligarchical assembly.

The evil still remains, if indeed it has not rather increased. I have ever taken still higher ground than Dr. Begg took. I have ever held that every minister and every elder has an equal right to sit in the Assembly, and an equal responsibility to discharge his duty as a member. But in a Church containing more than 1000 ministers, and probably not fewer than 10,000 elders, it is manifestly impossible that all can be members of each Assembly, or of any single Assembly. It has therefore been enacted that the Assembly shall consist of a third part of the ministers and as many elders. So particular is the enactment that it provides for the representation of Presbyteries the number of whose ministers is not a multiple of 3. Thus, for example, a Presbytery with 13 ministers would send four representatives for two years, and five the third year, while one with 14 ministers would send four one year and five the second and third years. The manifest intention is that every minister shall be a member of Assembly in the course of every three years. But if a man is sent out of his turn, then the others are to a certain

extent deprived of their rights, and prevented from discharging their duties. Sometimes a principle or a method may be tested by inquiring what it would lead to if carried to its extreme length. Now, a Presbytery has just as much right to send *all* its representatives out of their order as to send *any* of them. Suppose, then, a Presbytery consisting of six clerical members, and therefore entitled to send two members to the Assembly, were divided in their views of Church policy into a majority of four and a minority of two. The majority might elect two of themselves every year, and the minority would be absolutely excluded. Will any one say that Assemblies thus constituted would fitly express the mind of the Church? I am not aware that the matter has ever been carried to such an extent as this. But the evil does exist in every Assembly.

But it is said that, in order to the proper conduct of the business of the Assembly, it is necessary that every Assembly should contain a proportion of men of experience. I willingly grant it. But by the ordinary principles of the computation of probabilities this would be sufficiently secured by a *bona fide* application of the method of rotation. It is scarcely possible that any particular Assembly should be without a fair number of the venerable fathers of the Church. On an average there would be in each Assembly a third part of the dozen or so of men that are now members of every Assembly, and they would be quite enough to direct the proceedings, while younger men would be unconsciously habituated to occupy the position which in the course of nature they must occupy ere long.

Moreover, I think it a great evil that ministers should have the power of excluding their co-presbyters from the highest court of their Church. I confess that I recoil from the expression of a judgment that some of my co-presbyters are less fit than others for the exercise of functions which the Church assigns to all alike. Then there are, and there

will probably ever be, more or less defined parties in the Church; and I should regard it as one of the greatest evils that could befall me, to be obliged to vote for members of Assembly as I might vote for a member of Parliament, because their views were in accordance with mine. Representation by rotation is of course impossible in the House of Commons, since there are little more than 600 members to represent 30,000,000 of people, and Parliaments may last seven years, so that each person's turn would come but once in 350,000 years! But there is no such impossibility, nor any difficulty, in the case of an annual assembly containing a third part of the whole constituency.

I do not know that I would enforce rotation by absolute enactment, for it is admitted on all hands that in special circumstances the rotation should be modified, and these circumstances could not be defined by enactment. It happened, in point of fact, that in special circumstances both Dr. Begg and I were sent by the Presbytery of Edinburgh to the Assembly several years in succession. Presbyteries must be allowed to judge as to the occurrence of such specialties. But I am confident that it would be well for the Church if there were an honourable understanding amongst all the Presbyteries to abide by rotation as a rule, and to allow no exception unless there were some very urgent reason for it.

In Church Courts and public meetings the question of National Education continued to be agitated. A meeting was held in Edinburgh, on the 22d of April, "of the inhabitants favourable to a liberal and enlightened scheme of national education for Scotland, and having special reference to the Lord Advocate's bills." The meeting was addressed by the most prominent ministers of the Free Church, Drs. Candlish, Begg, and Guthrie. All these concurred in advocating the acceptance of the Lord Advocate's (Moncreiff) bills, Dr. Candlish intimating, however, that he desiderated a statutory recognition of religious teaching, and

some provision for securing, so far as possible, the religious character of the teachers to be appointed. They all agreed that this latter end could not be attained by the retention of the existing tests. An amendment was proposed by a minister of the Established Church, and the discussion became somewhat stormy. An extract from Dr. Begg's speech will show the position which he then occupied:—

"Some difficulties as to the course which they proposed in the resolutions submitted to the meeting had," he said, "been stated. For example, it had been said that there was no provision in either of the Lord Advocate's bills for having religion taught in the schools. For himself, he wished education to be religious, and to see the Bible and the Shorter Catechism continued in the schools; but he would ask their friends who had moved the amendment to state where was the statute introducing the Bible and the Shorter Catechism into the present schools of Scotland? The Bible and the Shorter Catechism had not been introduced into the schools of Scotland by statute, neither had they been maintained there by statute. They had been maintained there by the overwhelming public opinion of the people of Scotland, overbearing, he had reason to believe, in many instances, the secret wishes of some of the heritors themselves. Their friends argued against abolishing the test; and the arguments they used were just a continuation of the bugbears which had been raised at every step of this mighty struggle. When the test, for example, was abolished in reference to members of Parliament, men predicted that the very kingdom would fall to pieces.[1] When it was abolished in the case of magistrates, men also predicted that this city would go to wreck. And the same thing occurred in the case of the Universities when the tests there were abolished. The result had proved how groundless were all these statements. Then, again, tests had also been abolished to some extent in reference to schools, and that, too, without any of the evils predicted. The truth

[1] I may state that I do not think that Dr. Begg would have used this language either at an earlier or a later period. Certainly it is difficult to reconcile it with his constantly expressed sentiments on the subject of "Catholic Emancipation." —T. S.

was, that if ever the time came when the people of Scotland were prepared to have an inferior, or unchristian, or anti-christian education, all this miserable peddling machinery of tests would not for a moment prevent the approach of that day."

On the same subject, and in the same strain, Dr. Begg spoke at the Spring Meeting of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale. With reference to the fact that the Lord Advocate's bills had been disapproved by the Commissioners of Supply of Midlothian, he made light of their opposition, imputing it to their unwillingness to part with the patronage of the parish schools. "He then adverted to the £150,000 and upwards of unexhausted teinds in the hands of the country gentlemen, to which they had no right, and which should be appropriated to national education, and said they had no ground to speak as they did of upholding the parish schools out of their pockets, as they had been immense gainers. The people of Scotland should not rest satisfied until they had filled up the whole outline of the glorious plan which John Knox sketched for the education of the country."

It may be of some importance to request the reader's attention to the precise meaning of this statement. It is evidently its intention that the teinds whose application to the support of national education is advocated by Dr. Begg are only the unexhausted teinds. At no time of his life, I believe, would he have advocated the application to this, or to any secular object, of those teinds which were actually employed in the support of the Church, whatever might be his view as to the right to those teinds of the particular branch of the Church which actually enjoyed them.

Amid all his ecclesiastical and educational contests, Dr. Begg never became indifferent to the interests of the working-classes. It was upon them, rather than the lower stratum—the lapsed masses—that his attention was specially directed. He was not unaware of the sufferings, the sins and

sorrows, of the degraded dungeons of the West Port and the Canongate closes; but he was specially bent upon improving the condition, physical, mental, moral, and spiritual, of virtuous and intelligent working-men and their families. I have already alluded to his exertions to secure a Saturday's half-holiday; and I have now to notice a most gratifying recognition of the value of his exertions for this end. At the annual meeting of the "Saturday Half-holiday Association" an improvised ovation was accorded to Dr. Guthrie and him. Professor Miller was one of the speakers. He concluded his speech as follows:—

"Before sitting down, he wished, in connection with this part of the question of Saturday evening concerts, to refer to two men who had endured both scoff and scorn because of their connection with this movement. He referred, he need scarcely say, to Dr. Guthrie and Dr. Begg. (Great applause.) The conduct of their reverend friends was alike creditable to their heads and their hearts. He was not going to offer for them any remarks, in the way either of apology or defence. Neither of them needed a defender. Fortunately, each of them had got a hand that could keep his own head—(great cheering);—and with their leave he (Professor Miller) would, though he was not given to it,[1] propose a toast. (Laughter and cheers.) He would not like to drink it in anything strong; but he had no objection to drink it in water, or in nothing at all. (Laughter.) He begged, therefore, to propose a vote of thanks to their friends, Drs. Guthrie and Begg. Instead of a glassful, let them give them a heartful of thanks, and let them wish that they may be long spared fearlessly and faithfully, as heretofore, to fulfil their great mission of proclaiming the gospel message, 'Peace on earth, and good-will to the children of men.'" (Here the whole company stood up, and gave three cheers for Dr. Guthrie and Dr. Begg.)

[1] For the information of a distant posterity, the explanation may be given, which is not necessary for the present generation, that Professor Miller was a very strong advocate of total abstinence.—T. S.

The replies of the two men thus honoured were richly characteristic. Dr. Begg's must be given at length:—

"Dr. Begg, in reply, said that he felt under no necessity of justifying these Saturday evening concerts before the large and respectable meeting which had been convened on the present occasion. He had no wish to say anything harsh or unseemly of those who objected to these concerts. All he had to say was, that they were persons who did not understand the tone and temper of society. They were not practical men. They had not gone down into the arena of ordinary life, and learned there what were the real pulsations of the heart of humanity. He had as great respect as they possibly could have for the day of rest; and had done, in his own way, perhaps as much to conserve from being torn from the sons of toil that sole relic of an innocence which was no more. He would therefore yield to none of these grumblers in his zeal or respect for the day of sacred rest. He did not think, however, that the course of their friends who took an opposite view of these matters proved them practical men. They seemed to him to be men who had gone into their closets, and had sat down to consider what would be the best possible world, without reference to the actual condition of society. The consequence was that their theories were impracticable and unworkable; and the misfortune of these men was, that not only did they not work themselves, but they wished to hinder others who would work from doing anything for society. It would not do to attempt to argue the question upon the narrow basis on which those men sought to place it. These Saturday evening concerts were one of the grandest agencies which had yet been put in operation to counteract the whisky-shops; and it was, he thought, imperative that, before quarrelling with the efforts being made to counteract the pernicious influences of these places, they should be able to point out to them some more excellent way by which they may accomplish the object of their aim, for we wish them to know that we have no time to put off with mere grumblers. He concluded by saying, that though for himself attendance at these meetings was inconvenient in a very great degree, yet, when he remembered the number who could get on no other night, or at least, on no other night so well, he felt it his duty to throw feeling and

convenience aside, and to lend his aid in a movement which, however mistaken men might deem it, he felt was well fitted to exert, and was in fact exerting, a powerful influence in elevating the tastes of the people, taking them from the pollution of the dram-shop, and giving them a taste for the ennobling pleasures of literature and science and religion."

Although these sentiments are, to a large extent, mine, yet I ought in honesty to state that I am not sure that Dr. Begg would have stated them so strongly in later days. He was so set upon "happy homes," that he was almost morbidly jealous of anything that might tend to withdraw men in an evening from their own firesides. He therefore kept aloof from, or at all events went with little zeal into, all movements such as that of the "British Workman Public Houses," coffee-rooms, reading-rooms, &c. I often plied him with just such arguments as those which he himself employs in the above extract; but, I confess, with little success.

On the next subject that I find him discussing in public his sentiments never changed. Dr. M'Crie, the son of the biographer of Knox and Melville, and himself a Church historian of no mean order, was elected to a Professorship in the English Presbyterian College in London. The question of his "translation" came before the Presbytery of Edinburgh, and Dr. Begg, in moving that the translation should be allowed, stated and expounded the following thesis: "I think that the question of the training of ministers is now assuming its proper importance. In the Protestant Church it seems to me that the want of the day is an adequately trained ministry, a ministry adapted to the peculiar circumstances of the times."

About this time Dr. Begg turned his mind to a subject which he regarded, and I suppose rightly, as of great importance, and which he treated in letters to the newspapers, in public lectures, and in at least one pamphlet, the subject of "Forty-shilling Freeholds." The subject was important then,

chiefly because a certain class of people in England possessed the privilege of voting in parliamentary elections which the same class in Scotland did not enjoy. I do not know that it could be maintained on any abstract principle of justice that a man possessing a forty-shilling freehold should have a vote, while one possessing a thirty-nine-shilling one should have none. But certainly justice demanded that either the privilege should be taken away from the Englishman, or that it should be extended to the Scotchman. Now that the franchise has been so much extended, and has been equalised all over the kingdom, the question has no longer any existence. There is therefore no occasion for any discussion of it. But a passage may be given from one of his speeches on the subject, as a specimen of the eloquence which always characterised the perorations of his speeches:—

"Build your monument to Wallace by all means; let it be raised as high as Ben Lomond if you have the means; but still, if from its top on Ben Lomond you can look far and wide over an enslaved country, over a prostrate and politically dead people, blush for shame, that with a monument to the fame of a great patriot, your country is in such a state of vassalage six hundred years after he died as a martyr for her liberty. And let no man ever lay a stone on that noble cairn who is not prepared to assist us in following out this movement, by which to make our country free."

I give this specimen with all the more satisfaction because it shows how thoroughly Dr. Begg's heart was in all that he undertook. To others the matter might seem small; to him it was the work which his hand found to do, and he must do it with all his might. In this lay at once his strength and his weakness as a man of action,—his strength, when the cause was worthy of the might; his weakness, when the might was out of proportion to the matter.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

FORTY-SHILLING FREEHOLDS—PREACHING COMPETITIONS—BEGINNING OF THE UNION MOVEMENT—CHURCH EXTENSION AND THE SUSTENTATION FUND—EFFICIENCY OF THE MINISTRY—SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION—THRIFT—INDIAN GOVERNMENT EDUCATION.

Dr. Begg continued a vigorous agitation of the Freehold question, and with his constant friend, Mr. Duncan M'Laren, and others, went to London to urge the matter on the attention of the Government and the Scotch members of Parliament. At the close of last chapter I hinted a doubt as to the comparative value of the play and the candle. But it ought to be stated that Dr. Begg regarded the bestowal of the "Forty-shilling Freehold" right of voting as likely to give encouragement to numbers of the working-class to purchase crofts or small farms, and so attain a position of comparative independence. As agricultural matters were then, when it was possible for farmers to live, that was probably for the time a desirable object. But it may be questioned whether the bestowal of the right of voting would have contributed, to any considerable extent, to the promotion of that object. This only is certain, that Dr. Begg was thoroughly in earnest, and that he honestly believed that great good, in this and other directions, would result from the measure which he advocated; and when this was the case, he never failed to throw tremendous energy into the advocacy of what he regarded as a good cause. I find him, for example, at a meeting in Edinburgh, stating "that he believed that a meeting pregnant with vaster results had never assembled in this country." I alluded to the deputation to the Lord Advocate

on the subject. The conference between his Lordship and the deputation was amusing and characteristic. The Lord Advocate simply took the ground that the "Forty-shilling Freehold" qualification in England was an anomaly and an absurdity, and that there could be no propriety in extending it to Scotland. Dr. Begg, on the other hand, stood with equal firmness to his point, that the privilege which the Englishman enjoyed ought not to be withheld from the Scotchman. They travelled on parallel lines, and never met. I find Dr. Begg afterwards stating in a meeting in Edinburgh that at the close of a meeting in Leith he "heard a worthy workingman say to his neighbour, 'That meeting has really made the Lord Advocate very sma' bookit.'" [1]

The Assembly of 1856 sent down to Presbyteries an overture "anent the calling and election of ministers." The discussion of it in the Edinburgh Presbytery was introduced by Dr. Candlish. Dr. Begg delivered a masterly speech on the occasion, evincing that he had a very clear perception of the responsibility of congregations in the choice of ministers, and the temptations to which they are exposed in the exercise of this most important function. He was not blind, of course, to the disadvantages of "preaching competitions," but he was more alive to the danger of recourse being had to the recommendations of leading men in the Church. The following short extract is worthy of permanent record:—

"In the abstract, it might be very expedient for a congregation to choose a minister without hearing candidates. But then they were not dealing with the question in the abstract, but with the actual state of things as they existed in the Church; and he was pretty certain that if even the idea were thrown out, especially if sanctioned by a majority of Presbyteries, it would be very pernicious in this way, that it might lead people to imagine that the very perfection of choosing a minister consisted simply in coming to an agreement about one man; and the likelihood was, that in considering in what way they were to get this one man, they

[1] That is, "of very small bulk."—T. S.

might just make application to some eminent minister in the Church in whom they had confidence."

In other words, the object is not that there should be a harmonious choice of *one* man, but that there should be a harmonious choice of *the best* man, or of the man whom the congregation, on proper evidence, considered to be the best. This was a matter that lay very near Dr. Begg's heart. It is very difficult to ascertain the extent to which the reprehensible practice obtains. I have already had occasion to express my conviction that its complete cessation would be advantageous to those who recommend, to those who are recommended, and to those to whom the recommendations are addressed—to say nothing of those who, through want of such recommendations, are "left out in the cold."

The discussion as to the election of representatives to the Assembly came up again in 1857, and Dr. Begg was in a minority of 5 (21–16). In his speech on this occasion he stated very clearly and forcibly some of the evils against which he protested—substantially those to which I referred in last chapter—evils whose removal is yet a matter of desire. Higher ground might be taken than he took. But not the less do I consider his arguments unanswerable.

As proposals for union between the Free and the United Presbyterian Churches must claim a large measure of our attention in the sequel, it may be well to record, for subsequent reference, the earliest formal proposal for such union. It will of course be understood that there had been much consultation and private suggestions at earlier dates. But the first public proposal was contained in a series of resolutions subscribed by about seventy "lay members"—probably most of them office-bearers—of each of the Churches, and published on the 2d of May 1857. I believe that the prime mover in this proposal was the late Sir George Sinclair, and the document was signed by the Marquis of Breadalbane, the Earl of Kintore, and Lord Panmure—the

only peers, so far as I know, who were members of the Free Church—and by many other men of influential position and high character. I have no doubt that the signatories in the United Presbyterian Church were equally influential and equally Christian, though naturally their names are not so familiar to me. The substance of the eight resolutions which the document contains is that which afterwards formed the basis of the negotiations of which we are to hear much; that the Churches are at one in holding the essential doctrines of grace, and in worship, and discipline, and differ only regarding the relations which the State ought to maintain towards the Church and the School; and that these should be left "open questions." This document very naturally, and very properly, was received with much respect by the members of both Churches, and was the first step towards the negotiations which led to the second ten years' conflict, from 1863 to 1873.

The question as to the relation of "Church Extension Charges" to the Sustentation Fund was still undecided. Various plans had been tried, but the fact still remained that while the Sustentation Fund steadily increased, the proceeds of it to the several ministers did not increase. This, of course, was due to the constant increase of the divisor, which kept down the quotient, notwithstanding the larger amount of the sum to be divided. This was felt to be an evil. Yet it was equally felt that Church Extension must go on, and the question was, how it was to be conducted so as not to entail the evil. This was manifestly a practical question of great importance and of great difficulty. It was a question to whose consideration Dr. Begg gave great attention, and to whose solution—so far as it has been solved—he largely contributed. At the Spring Meeting of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, he proposed the following overture, which was unanimously adopted:—"Whereas a select committee has been appointed to consider the whole subject of the Sustentation Fund, and a public pledge given that no alteration

shall be made on the ground of any result arrived at by said committee until their report is submitted to the deliberate consideration of Presbyteries; it is humbly overtured that the General Assembly shall take care to adopt no regulations in regard to Church Extension, by which the question of an equal dividend from the Sustentation Fund may in the meantime be prejudiced; and especially that they shall consider whether any interim arrangements in regard to Church Extension ought not to be made from some special fund set apart for this purpose, and kept entirely separate from the Sustentation Fund, until the general question of the equal dividend is deliberately settled." In the discussion of the overture, Sir Henry Moncreiff stated the difficulty with admirable terseness—"As a member of the Sustentation Fund Committee, his feeling on the one hand was, that it would never do for the Church to get into the position that they could not go on with Church Extension because it might interfere with the stipends of the ministers; or on the other, to leave the matter altogether undefined, as at present, so that the Assembly might fall into the other extreme of being hurried on by the pressure of local influence into the sanctioning of charges without due consideration." I have stated that the question may still be considered as not perfectly settled. But the method now adopted, in the line of Dr. Begg's overture and Sir Henry Moncreiff's speech, works, on the whole, satisfactorily. It is in substance this. New charges which are not self-sustaining have no claim on the Sustentation Fund, but receive grants from the Home Mission Fund. These grants are given for three years, and then diminish according to a fixed scale from £100 to nothing. The cases of the several congregations of this class are considered in their order by the Platform Committee, who may recommend a number not exceeding six in any one year for admission to the "platform;" and only on their report, and with the concurrence of the Sustentation Committee, the Assembly on a deliberate vote admits them to a share of

the equal dividend. Perhaps this is as good a method as can be devised of encouraging the extension of the Church and safeguarding the Sustentation Fund. It is manifest that in respect of such a matter abstract perfection is not to be expected. Under the present system disappointed congregations very naturally feel that they have been severely dealt with. But the remedy is, to a great extent, in their own hands; and by an increased exertion they can generally turn the disappointment of to-day into the success of to-morrow.

Dr. Begg was not a member of the Assembly of 1857, and its action in this matter did not please him. It was in substance a proposal to give grants *from the Sustentation Fund* to new congregations. Dr. Begg, accordingly, in July, addressed the office-bearers of the Free Church through the newspapers. This letter is very important. It advocates the displacement from the platform, on the occurrence of vacancies, of charges which had been injudiciously placed on it, or which, from changed circumstances, were no longer required. It further recommends the provision of endowments for special congregations. But perhaps its most characteristic suggestion is contained in its third proposal, as follows:—

"In connection with this it seems vital that something more should be done to make the people sure that they are getting value for their money. The Sustentation Fund suffers in some quarters more from inefficient ministers than from all other causes put together. Let a minister only secure the confidence and hearts of his people by faithful preaching and devoted labour, and he need hardly open his mouth about the mere mechanism of the Sustentation Fund. Let a minister go to sleep, and treat the fund simply as an annuity on which he can reckon, and he becomes a mere burden upon the Church, whilst the Fund at the same time dries up. Now although the Free Church ministers as a body may take rank with any in the world, our system at present savours by far too much of practical Independency. As a beginning of

something better, and a means of ascertaining the facts from year to year, I should like to see an annual return, or filled-up schedule, presented to the Assembly of what every minister actually does. This would tend also to correct some of the innovations which, I know, are quietly creeping in in certain quarters."

The Social Science Association was formed, and held its first meeting in October, under the presidency of Lord Brougham. We find Dr. Begg speaking as follows in connection with a paper on "Density of Population and Localisation of Dwellings":—

"The Rev. Dr. BEGG, of Edinburgh, said, that in Scotland there was no legislation whatever on this subject. From what he had seen himself he could say, that there were no more degrading habitations in any Christian land, nay, not even the Indian wigwams, than there were in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Than in the agricultural districts of Scotland —Midlothian, for instance, where the land was most highly cultivated—there was no more degraded population anywhere to be found. When he first went into that district there was not a cottage to be found with more than one bedroom; the landlords appeared to care nothing for the population; the tenants cared less.[1] They both took care that a cow or horse should have proper shelter, knowing that, if either died, it would take a considerable sum to replace it. If a man died, there was another to fill his place at once. Direct legislation for Scotland was the only remedy."

At a meeting of the General Committee of the Freehold Association, Dr. Begg gave some account of the Birmingham meeting, and made reference to several of the matters on which his heart was set. It was on this occasion, so far as I have seen, that he first called attention to "the bothy system," a branch of the great subject of the house accommodation of the working-classes. I shall have occasion to say a good deal on this subject, and shall not now stop even to

[1] This statement respecting the tenants Dr. Begg publicly repudiated, and declared that he never made it.—T. S.

explain what a bothy is—would that I could say—what it was!

At a meeting of the Half-Holiday Association, held in Edinburgh a few days later, Dr. Begg made an important speech on thrift and self-improvement. "A new question," he said, "has arisen in connection with the half-holiday movement, viz., How are the workmen to avail themselves to the full extent of the leisure which has been secured to them by the half-holiday movement?—for it is one thing to obtain leisure, and another to turn that leisure to the greatest possible amount of advantage. I relish rational amusement; but what I am particularly anxious about is the elevation of the working-classes of this country in the social scale." . . . "If you go over the whole world, you will find that the entire experience of mankind from the beginning of the world—and it will continue to the end—is the same. There must be self-reliance, self-denial, economy, and determined perseverance; and with these elements the social ladder stands by the foot of every man in this kingdom; and he may put his foot on the first step of that ladder, and go on to the very topmost. But otherwise it is impossible, even although all the half-holiday associations in the world were to combine to make the attempt." . . . "A friend of mine said with great truth, 'Put a man who is not a model man himself into a model lodging-house, and it will not materially alter his circumstances.'"

Towards the close of this year occurred the failure of a Glasgow bank—the Western—which brought ruin on multitudes of families, and wrought terrible disaster all over the country. Dr. Begg "improved the occasion" by addressing a letter through the newspapers "to the people of Scotland," under the title, "Questions raised by the Money Panic." It is almost amusing to notice how the writer contrives to introduce almost all the matters which were nearest his heart in connection with almost any event that might occur. I

suppose it is always so with a man of great earnestness and vivid imagination. As a casual sound fits itself into our dream and mingles with the current of our thoughts, so such an event as the monetary crisis was laid hold of by his strong mind and incorporated with his habitual thought. After some very pertinent remarks on the currency, and the Scotch banking-system, and the necessity of something being done to control the proceedings of all joint-stock companies in the interest of the shareholders, and several other topics, he proceeds thus:—

"These questions will, no doubt, be all thoroughly canvassed by those who have a special interest in them; but, meantime, what is to be the result on the masses of our working people, and what is to be done for them? There are whole districts of Scotland in which the people are by these transactions suddenly thrown out of work at the beginning of winter. To aggravate this evil greatly, any little savings which they had accumulated are at the same time unexpectedly locked up in consequence of the late catastrophe. It says much, indeed, for the working classes of Scotland that in the Western Bank alone there were deposits amounting to £500,000 in sums under £50 each.

"One, and perhaps the most important, lesson to be learned from what has happened, is the necessity of providing a more simple form of solid investment for the earnings of the people, by opening up the whole soil of Scotland to fair competition, on the principle of 'Free-trade in land.' It is laudable but comparatively easy for our great noblemen, with whole counties in absolute possession, holding no bank shares, or, if they do, shielded from all real risk by the law of entail, to stand amidst the wrecks of the present system and cry up its excellence, without saying a word of the social mischiefs to which we have alluded. In one sense, we do not dispute the great benefits which our banking system has conferred upon Scotland. On the contrary, we rejoice and glory in it; but the people will by and by discover that, especially for the investments of small capitalists, the best bank is a bank of earth."

In December of this year Dr. Tweedie brought before the Presbytery of Edinburgh a proposal to memorialise the Government on the subject of their countenancing idolatry in India. Dr. Begg supported the motion in a long and important speech, which indeed expresses some sentiments with which I do not agree, but which also contains much important matter of permanent interest. As an example of the former, I shall simply quote one sentence: "No doubt it had been said, 'Introduce the Bible into the schools.' Individually he had no particular objection to that; in fact, he thought it would be a right thing; but he doubted extremely whether, in the present temper of the Government, there was the least possibility that ever that advice would be taken; and more than that, he doubted to what extent there was a likelihood of all the Christianity of this country agreeing in giving that advice." Surely this is not an adequate view to take of the crime and blunder of the Indian Government in excluding religious instruction from its educational system. There were indeed great difficulties—of the Government's own creation—in substituting a better system for that of which they had so long boasted on the very ground of its exclusion of religion, whereas at first there would have been no difficulty at all in providing religious instruction for those who might choose to avail themselves of it. Another difficulty of exceeding magnitude consisted in the fact that a very considerable proportion of the European teachers of Government schools, having been appointed without reference to religious profession or Christian character, were men to whom no Christian would have liked to see the teaching of the Bible entrusted. But these and such-like difficulties were not in Dr. Begg's mind, and even if they had been, it was not like him to recoil from the inculcation of what is right, on the ground of the difficulty of its attainment. The most valuable parts of the speech in question are those in which he shows the importance of improving the

administration of our army in order to induce a higher, more moral, and more religious class of men to enter it. These, when sent in the course of service to India, would exert a good influence on the natives, instead of the pernicious influence so often exerted by our troops. His suggestion as to the affording facilities for colonisation of the parts of India suitable for the residence of Europeans, is also worthy of earnest consideration.

At the same meeting of Presbytery, Dr. Begg proposed a motion for enlarging the representation of Presbyteries in the General Assembly. His proposal was that which was actually adopted, and which continues in force, viz., that Presbyteries should send one representative for every three members. The principle is a good one. But the proportion may possibly require to be modified with the growth of the Church. In point of fact there is not now accommodation in the Assembly Hall for all the members, although a portion of one of the galleries has been added to the body of the House.

CHAPTER XL.

COMMERCIAL MORALITY—ROMISH SCHOOL-BOOKS—BOTHY SYSTEM—INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC—ROMANIST SCHOOLS —HIGHLANDS AND HIGHLANDERS—EQUAL DIVIDEND —INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC—FORBES MACKENZIE ACT —CARDROSS CASE—SABBATH OBSERVANCE—SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION—GOOD HOUSES.

INSTIGATED apparently by the sad state of matters brought to light by the disclosures made in connection with the failure of the Western Bank, the Presbytery of Edinburgh, on the motion of Dr. Begg, overtured the General Assembly to issue a pastoral address on the subject of "Commercial Morality." But, while the occasion of the overture was probably the event referred to, its scope was far more comprehensive. It was "that the General Assembly should issue a pastoral address applicable to the present time, with special reference to the moralities of commercial and social life: the duties thereanent of civil rulers, landlords, traders, masters and servants, and parents and children; and that the Assembly instruct all ministers to call the special attention of their congregations to the subject." In his speech he referred to Sabbath trading; to the inequalities of the law as affecting men who swindled on a large or on a small scale, "small culprits being punished—although sometimes even they were not punished sufficiently—but great culprits, gigantic culprits who swindled on an immense scale, were to a large extent allowed to pass with impunity." With reference to landlords he specially referred to the "bothy system," and the state of the houses of the working-classes generally. Speaking of the relation between masters and servants, he deplored the deteriorations of that relation. "The former state of things in Scotland, when there was a beautiful and most

salutary connection between these two classes of society, had to a large extent been abolished, to the great injury both of these classes themselves and of the general community." "Last of all, he referred to parents and children; and probably it would be found that here was the root of nine-tenths of all the evil. It was well said lately by the American ambassador at Berlin, that if any good was to be done in the world it must be done through the reconstruction of the family relations. The church in the house will be found to be the basis and strength of the Church of Christ in all ages of the world. The duty of parents was to instruct their children, to instruct them themselves, and not to hand them over to the care of others; and the duty of children was to obey, respect, and reverence their parents. This was amongst the most important of all the social duties, and to perform this might be said to lay the basis of peace and good order in society, and the well-being of all classes even through eternal ages." It is impossible to read this speech without being struck with the comprehensiveness of Dr. Begg's mind. He was often represented as a man who dealt with hobbies and little points, and who was incapable of distinguishing between great things and small. I am not sure that I did not sometimes make the same representation to himself in a half-jesting tone. But it would have been more accurate to say that he perceived, more clearly than most other men, the connections of things, and the bearings of small things upon great. Especially he apprehended, more clearly than most, the bearing of the Gospel and the Christian system on all the affairs of men, its right to dominate all men and all in every man, and the blessedness of such domination.

At the same meeting of Presbytery Dr. Begg proposed an overture on the Sustentation Fund, embodying the same proposals with regard to church extension which he had previously expressed. There was an almost unanimous expression of accordance with his views on the part of members of Presbytery,

notably Sir Henry Moncreiff, Dr. Ramsay Davidson, and Dr. Maclachlan—Dr. Candlish was not present when the overture was discussed—but upon the whole, it was considered better not to transmit the overture to the Assembly, but to send it to a special committee of Assembly which had been appointed to consider the subject. In this course Dr. Begg acquiesced.

At next meeting of Presbytery Dr. Begg proposed that a remonstrance should be addressed to the Committee of Privy Council on Education against their issuing a list of books for use in schools, many of which abounded with Romish error. The Council had refused to take any responsibility with regard to *religious* books. But in many of the *Reading* books and the books of history there were very pronounced Romanist statements. For example, in the first book of reading lessons the child was taught to say, "I must often make the sign of the cross, that is, bless myself. I should also learn what that holy sign means, and take care not to make it in too great haste." In the more advanced books there were prayers addressed to Mary, to Joseph, to "My Guardian Angel." Monastic orders were declared to be "the very life-blood of the Church, and a Church without monasteries was a body with its right arm paralysed." There were also books of history in which the Reformation was strongly condemned, and books of geography in which Popish states were represented as well-governed and Protestant states as ill-governed. It is evident that this matter could scarcely be discussed without introducing the whole question of the mode of national education. The Free Church had consented to accept Government grants for its schools on the same terms on which grants were made to Romanist and Unitarian schools. This was approved of by Dr. Begg, and by Dr. Guthrie, who seconded his motion on this occasion. But it was regarded by many excellent men in the Church as giving sanction to the indiscriminate endowment of truth and error. While therefore all agreed that Dr.

Begg and Dr. Guthrie succeeded in showing that the action of the Council was wrong, there were some who regarded that action as the legitimate and necessary consequence of the wrong in which the mover and seconder of the motion had acquiesced. In these circumstances the discussion was necessarily protracted, and had to be adjourned.

The same newspaper in which this discussion is reported[1] contains also a letter addressed by Dr. Begg to the Duke of Buccleuch on the bothy system. His Grace had presided at a meeting held in Edinburgh, at which a report was read and approved, which represented the objections brought against the bothy system as applicable only to its abuse, and stated that "many philanthropists are convinced that a well-regulated male bothy is a proper, and even necessary, adjunct to the best arrangements for working a large farm." After a sincere and well-merited acknowledgment of the Duke's earnest desire and exemplary efforts to improve the condition of the labourers on his estates, he asks: "What is a bothy? It is a kind of human stable or cow-house, invented for cheapness by the greedy lairds of Aberdeen and Angus, into which the farm labourers, made in the image of God, are huddled after their work. So far as I can gather, its physical and moral mischiefs are unexampled, except under the worst forms of heathenism. Fair words are always plausible, and may mislead the ignorant, but all experience proves that you may as well speak of a well-regulated pandemonium as of a well-regulated bothy."

He then quotes a statement by Sheriff Watson of Aberdeen, a man of whom I may be pardoned if I am disposed to boast as a near relative and friend, since I can state that there are few men who have done so much as he has for improving the circumstances and the character of our working people in town and country.[2] He then in strong

[1] *Witness*, January 23, 1858.—T. S.

[2] Sheriff Watson died on the 12th of May 1887.—T. S.

language, indeed, and in most manifest earnestness, denounces the whole system, and deprecates its introduction into districts in which it was still untried. "Landlords should be told plainly, and especially our Scotch landlords, that the very least thing they can do is to build decent cottages for those by the sweat of whose brows their rents are secured. The landlords of Scotland get the largest rents in the world, and, till lately, with the smallest burdens; and if their public burdens are now increasing, they may trace even that result to their own infatuated policy."

As might have been expected, Dr. Begg's views and statements were strongly controverted, and he continued to struggle against all opposition, and not without some measure of success, although the system has not yet been altogether abolished. I have not such knowledge of the subject as would warrant my assuming the rôle of the arbitrator. I never saw a bothy; and indeed even my theoretical knowledge of the system was mainly derived from Dr. Begg himself. But I can form a pretty good conception of what the forecastle of a ship would be if there were no captain and no officers on board from year's end to year's end; and this, I think, would be a very parallel case to that of a bothy; with the difference only in favour of the forecastle, that the isolation of the ship would preserve its inmates from external temptations, to which those of the bothy must be constantly exposed.

In the Presbytery of Edinburgh, on the 6th of February, a matter was introduced which in the course of years gradually attained greater magnitude. Dr. Candlish and Dr. Begg introduced the following overture: "Whereas, the late General Assembly appointed a committee to consider on what footing the intercourse and correspondence between this Church and the sister Presbyterian Churches of England and Ireland should be placed, it is humbly overtured that, in sanctioning any plan for regulating that matter, regard

should be had to the maintenance of the purity of worship in the Presbyterian Churches of these realms." The mover and seconder of the overture intimated that it had special reference to a proposal made about that time in the Presbyterian Church of England for the permission of the use of instrumental music in public worship. Each of them, while disclaiming any wish to dictate to an independent sister Church, very strongly deprecated the pursuance of a course by that Church, which must unhappily modify the relation of that Church to the Free Church. A sentence or two from each of their speeches will indicate with much precision the position which they severally occupied.

Dr. Candlish concluded his speech in these words: "He looked with considerable alarm even on the question being left as an open question in any Presbyterian Church—he looked with great alarm on its being raised at all in a Presbyterian Church. He thought the responsibility exceedingly great on the part of those who disturbed the peace of the Presbyterian Church by raising any such question; he thought that responsibility lay wholly and entirely on the innovators. Without wishing in the slightest degree to dictate, he thought all friends of Presbyterian unity and of order should well consider how such a question should be disposed of without[1] the least injury, in such a way as not to endanger any plans for drawing closer the bonds of intercourse and of union amongst the Presbyterian Churches."

Dr. Begg "deprecated the introduction of the instrumental music question into this Church, for he believed that their forefathers, in discarding organs, acted on the principles laid down in the New Testament. He believed it was impossible for any intelligent, enlightened Protestant to defend the use of instrumental music in public worship on scriptural grounds, which could not be used to defend incense, crossings at baptism, kneeling at the communion table, and many

[1] Qu. "with"?—T. S.

other things which the Presbyterian Church had discarded from her worship as not authorised by the New Testament. . . . In reply to the assertion that there was no principle involved in the introduction of instrumental music, he maintained that this, if correct, placed all the responsibility upon the parties who proposed its introduction."

The transmission of the overture was opposed, but on a vote was carried by a majority of 12 (20–8). This gave rise to a correspondence in the newspapers, Drs. Blaikie and Guthrie writing to state that they were absent from the meeting, and that if they had been present they would have opposed the overture, and Dr. Bruce replying in the richest vein of humour.

On the resumption of the discussion in the Presbytery on Popish school-books (see p. 247), Dr. Candlish moved that Dr. Begg's motion be not adopted. This he did, not because he disagreed with it, but because he thought it inexpedient to deal separately with what was but a small part of a great evil. A somewhat keen debate ensued, but on a vote Dr. Begg was in a majority of 8 (16–8).

On the election of members of Assembly by the Presbytery, the question of rotation again came up. It so happened that both Dr. Candlish and Dr. Begg fell to be sent by rotation, the latter not having been a member of Assembly for six years; but a motion was made by Dr. Candlish that Dr. Hanna should be sent out of his turn, to the exclusion of the last on the rotation list; but in a vote that list was adhered to. As several resignations took place before the meeting of Assembly, Dr. Hanna was proposed to supply one of the vacancies thus caused. But he intimated that he could not be a consenting party to a deviation from rotation, and so the vacancies were filled up on that principle.

At the same meeting of Presbytery Dr. Begg again brought up the question of Popery, by proposing an overture to the Assembly to consider the whole subject of the indiscriminate

educational grants given by Government, the effect of such grants in promoting the increase of Romish institutions in the land, and the duty of this Church in reference thereto. He was probably induced to propose this overture by the objection which was taken to his remonstrance against Popish books, that these were but a small portion of a great evil. In advocating its transmission he made out a terrible case, first, as to the increase of Romish institutions; and, secondly, as to the apathy of Protestants generally, and of the Free Church and its Assembly in particular. It is to be feared that the same tale might be told, in an enlarged edition, to-day.

At the April Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, Dr. Begg was again at his post, reporting on the subject of accommodation for the working-classes, and striking another blow at the bothy system. It had become evident that legislative action was necessary in order to enable proprietors of entailed estates, even if they were willing, to provide houses for farm servants. Such proprietors were entitled to burden the estates with certain charges. It had been decided that dog-kennels were a legitimate charge of this kind, and by the same court that cottages for farm labourers were not! It could not well be expected that a life-renter, whose heir of entail might be a distant relative, and who might himself have a family of daughters, should impoverish them by erecting houses which would at his death become the property of the heir-male. All that was wanted was an enactment declaring that labourers' cottages should be put on the same level with dogs' kennels!

Dr. Begg was a member of the Assembly this year (1858), the first of which he was a member for six years, as has been stated. He, of course, took a leading part in the proceedings. He seconded the motion for the adoption of the Report of the Committee on the Highlands. He paid a hearty tribute to the convener, Dr. Maclachlan, whom he described as in

many respects a model convener. He then referred to the cases of site-refusal which still existed in the Highlands; recommended that efforts should be made to obtain, by means of donations and bequests, endowments for Highland charges, and concluded by the following reference to the bursary scheme of the committee: "He had no sympathy with the opinion that their bursaries were becoming a nuisance, though, if ill-regulated, they might be productive of evil. But if there were a sufficient number of bursaries, and there were intermediate schools in various districts of the Highlands, and if they would watch over the youth in these schools, and make the bursaries the terminating prizes for the young men who had the highest talent and greatest aptitude for the ministry,—by so doing they might gather the cream of the Highlands, and send them back to evangelise that noble and deeply interesting country."

We have seen how greatly Dr. Begg's interest in the Highlands was excited by the Inverness Assembly. But I do not find any indication of his being specially associated with distinctively Highland interests until the time which we have now reached. From this time onwards that association gradually increased; so also did his intimacy with, and his confidence in, the leading men of the North, among his chiefest friends being the two Mackays (Mackintosh and George), John Kennedy, and Gustavus Aird, as well as such laymen as the late Culloden and Dr. Mackenzie of Eilenach; not to mention others, who are still alive.

Dr. Begg, in seconding a motion on the Report of the Committee on the Distribution of Probationers, took occasion to introduce his often-stated views with regard to clerical recommendations and virtual patronage. "He trusted the ministers of the Church would abstain, as far as probationers were concerned, from any exercise of personal influence, which might have the effect of giving undue advantage to one probationer over another when vacancies occurred. For

he believed there had been very general and just complaints in this matter. He believed there was a tendency in the direction of a spurious clerical patronage in some quarters of the Church. . . . He did not quarrel with any minister who gave his candid opinion when it was asked, but anything more than that—anything in the way of obtruding an opinion which gave one probationer undue advantage over another—was very wrong."

The vexed question of the equal dividend came up on the report of a special committee which had been appointed by the Assembly of 1856. Dr. Begg moved, "That the Assembly resolve to transmit this report for the consideration of the Presbyteries of the Church, instructing them to send in any suggestions which they may desire to make in regard to it to the clerks of Assembly before the meeting of the Commission in March next. The Assembly at the same time declare that, in taking this step, they do not mean to throw any doubt upon the propriety of maintaining, as at present, the equal dividend from the Sustentation Fund to all ministers upon the permanent platform of the Church." It was the latter clause that was important. The report did recommend the withdrawal in certain cases of congregations from the equal dividend, and Dr. Buchanan's motion asked only for suggestions from Presbyteries as to the change actually proposed, apparently debarring Presbyteries from consideration of the question whether it were not better that no change should be made. Dr. Begg supported his motion in a long and very able speech. I can do no more than extract a few characteristic sentences: "Well, you have very little need to teach the people of Scotland that ministers can live on £100 a year. You either admit that this is the starving-point, or you admit that ministers can live on £100 a year. If you admit that they can so live you will get plenty of people in Scotland to agree with you; for I believe that the source of the whole difficulty with which we have to struggle in

connection with this Sustentation Fund is just the opinion of many country people that £100 a year is plenty for a minister. They say, '£100 a year! I can keep my wife on £25; and as for the minister, he has an easy life of it, and gets his bread by the win' o' his mooth.'" It was recommended in the report that the change should only be introduced as vacancies occurred, and should not affect the present incumbents. Dr. Begg's remark on this is noble. "No doubt it is said this plan is not to apply to you during your lifetime. Well, that is a very cunning provision. I do not use the term in any very invidious sense. But it seems to me that if the thing is a good thing, and if the evils are so clamant, this grand panacea ought to be applied at once. Why not apply it at once if it is a good thing? Why should we go to our graves without seeing it applied? I believe it would have been proposed to apply it at once if it had been thought there was the least likelihood that it would go down. But the real proposal is, you will let us do what we like with regard to the men who are to come after you if you secure your own interest. Now, in the first place, the interests of congregations are at stake as well as the interests of ministers, and ministers are not entitled in this Assembly to do any act which will interfere with the future rights of their congregations; and that man would be a base man indeed if he thought a system bad in itself, and would not like himself to be subjected to it, and yet was prepared to subject his successor and his congregation to it after he was in his grave. I feel that a man should stand up for the rights of his successor as much as for his own, and for the rights of his congregation more than for his own, and therefore I throw aside the idea of the scheme being prospective, and maintain that we must judge of it on its present merits, and approve or disapprove of it accordingly." "I know that what our friends are proposing they are proposing in good faith. I admire their generosity, and their sacrifices on behalf of the

Church. I will yield to no man in my respect for them. But I must express my opinion in a matter like this, when we are tampering with the very essential principles with which we started. I warned the men of Canada, when they were tampering with their equal dividend, that to tamper with it was to destroy it. . . . Everybody understands an equal dividend; but if you get into all this complexity, I believe you may disgust the people with it and may never have an opportunity of reconstructing it. But if you are determined on this scheme, I say take your course, as I said with the rating scheme. I said then that you were tampering with the foundations of the scheme, and I hold now that you are tearing down the very pillars of your financial temple. And if that financial temple, which has been constructed with so much pains, and which has been the admiration of all Churches and of all the world,—if that temple is dismantled, and if it lies for future historians to describe it as a ruin, they may write upon it this inscription—it is worthy of a scriptural inscription—'*Every wise woman buildeth her house, but the foolish woman pulleth it down with her hands.*'"

At the close of a very long and animated debate, Dr. Buchanan's motion was carried against Dr. Begg's by a majority of 99 (225–126).

In moving the adoption of the Report of the Committee on Popery, given in by his friend Dr. Gibson of Glasgow, Dr. Begg spoke in forcible terms of the progress of Romanism and the apathy of Protestants. He announced the purchase by the Protestant Institute of the old Magdalene Chapel in which the first General Assembly was held, and in which John Craig preached at the Reformation.[1] Dr. Gibson "inti-

[1] I suppose that Knox and Craig were the only Protestant ministers in Edinburgh at that time. It is said that Knox preached in the High Street to the common people, and Craig in the Magdalene Chapel to the higher classes. I may be allowed to say in a note that I thought myself entitled to be regarded as the immediate successor of Craig, after a vacancy of 300 years. By the kindness of the Protestant Institute I got the use of the Magdalene Chapel

mated his resignation of the convenership of the Committee on Popery, and said the House would concur with him that there was one much more fitted than any other could possibly be for that office, whom he begged now to propose—Dr. Begg."—"Dr. Begg, though ready to do all in his power as a member of committee, wished to be excused from being convener on account of his other engagements. He suggested the Rev. David Thorburn of Leith as convener."—"Dr. Candlish had no objection to Mr. Thorburn, but he thought it was very obvious that Dr. Begg should be the convener."—"Dr. Begg deferred to the wish of the Assembly, and accepted the convenership."

In the same Assembly, Dr. Begg seconded a motion by Sir Henry Moncreiff that the representation of Presbyteries in the Assembly should be by a third of the ministers and as many elders. This was agreed to by a majority, in opposition to a motion in favour of a fourth,—and was sent down to Presbyteries in terms of the Barrier Act.

The question came up on the overture from the Presbytery of Edinburgh (p. 249), and similar overtures from two other Presbyteries, as to the relations between the Free Church and the English Presbyterian Church, as affected by the action of the latter Church with regard to instrumental music. The discussion was admirably conducted. The *status quæstionis* was clearly stated by Dr. Candlish, Dr. Robert Buchanan, and Dr. Begg. There was no proposal to exclude churches using instrumental music from catholic communion, but only, in the event of organs being sanctioned by the English Presbyterian Church, to modify the peculiar relations which subsisted between that Church and the Free Church. Dr. Buchanan especially gave no uncertain sound. He said, "As to the question

till the Cowgate-Head Church was built; and, so far as I know, no ordained minister had statedly officiated in it between Craig and myself. The venerable edifice is now appropriated to very useful services conducted in connection with the Livingston Memorial Institute.—T. S.

of catholic communion, he should deprecate as strongly as Sheriff Monteith the idea of adopting any motion that would interrupt in the slightest degree the catholic communion which one Christian Church ought to hold with another, whether they had organs or not, or even whether they differed in greater or more important matters than organs. That question was not raised here at all. The question raised here arose naturally out of the fact that it is not a question of catholic communion, but a question of the special communion which we hold with the Presbyterian Church in England. But this he would say, that, on the supposition Mr. Monteith made, if the Presbyterian Church in England were to go the length he pointed out, and actually to sanction the introduction of the organ, then, while he should continue with all his heart to hold catholic communion with that Church, as he would with the United Presbyterian and many other Churches, he would take the responsibility of moving the repeal of the law by which ministers of the Presbyterian Church in England could be translated to charges in the Free Church. He would have no hesitation in moving the repeal of that law, and in affirming in the same voice that, as regarded the question of Catholic communion, he was in the same position in which he had all along stood." Dr. Begg maintained the position which he occupied from the first day of his public life to the last—the only tenable ground in my judgment—that the worship of God is to be kept pure and entire, as prescribed in the Word of God, *pure* in the sense that nothing is to be added to it, *entire* in the sense that nothing is to be taken from it. It will suffice to give the closing sentences of his speech. "I think, therefore, that the proposal of Dr. Candlish is most reasonable. I trust that, in any arrangements which may be made for our future intercourse with Churches, we shall take care, without pretending to dictate to them, to make it quite clear that, as a Church, we are as determined to maintain the great principle

that God's Word alone shall guide us in our worship, as we were determined at the time of the Disruption that God's Word alone should guide us in the government and discipline of our Church. The principle is the same in both cases. You may say it is the will of congregations; you may say it is the will of church courts; but I hold that, if you come down from the very high ground of being regulated in such matters only by God's Word, and not by man's will, not only as to government and discipline, but also in the matter of public worship, we descend from the ground on which we notoriously stand as the Free Church of Scotland. I cordially second the motion of Dr. Candlish."

A counter-motion was made, but was withdrawn on the condition of its mover and supporters being allowed to record their dissent. This dissent was entered by four ministers and four elders. Thus in 1858 the Assembly gave forth an all but unanimous condemnation of the use of instrumental music in public worship. Would that the Assembly of 1883 had done the same!

In introducing the overture from the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale on Privy Council grants to Romish schools, Dr. Begg frankly admitted the difficulties with which the question was beset, and went no further than to propose that the whole subject should be remitted to the committees on Popery and on Education jointly. In his speech, however, he stated his conviction that the solution was to be found in a national system of education, the particular features of which he did not indicate. He also introduced the overture from the Synod on "Houses for the working classes," and proposed the appointment of a committee on the subject. This was unanimously agreed to, and he was appointed convener of the committee.

In moving the adoption of the Report of the Committee on Temperance, Dr. Begg gave valuable testimony of the beneficial action of the Forbes Mackenzie Act.

"Dr. Begg, in moving the re-appointment of the committee, with Professor Miller as convener, said that experience must have convinced every minister that that Act had been most effective in restraining drunkenness. He could testify for himself, for example, being connected with a suburb of Edinburgh where formerly there used to be poured out every Sabbath the scum of Edinburgh, that the shutting of the public-houses has had the effect of at least keeping those individuals at home. The greatest good had resulted from the Act, and he thought, if the Free Church did its duty, it would not only petition against the raising of the question at present, but use all its influence in every way, to prevent any relaxation of that valuable enactment."

It ought to be mentioned, for the sake of future reference, that it was in this Assembly that the famous "Cardross Case" originated. Mr. Macmillan of Cardross, having been found guilty of drunkenness, was suspended *sine die.* He then applied to the Court of Session, and obtained an interdict to prohibit the Assembly from carrying this sentence into effect. Being cited before the Assembly he was asked whether the application to the Court of Session was made at his instance and with his authority. Having answered this question in the affirmative, he was deposed from the office of the ministry. Dr. Begg does not seem to have taken any part in these initial proceedings; but it was necessary to chronicle them in order to the understanding of the subsequent proceedings, in which he took a somewhat prominent part.

At the meeting of the Presbytery of Edinburgh in October, Dr. Begg made a speech on Sabbath observance, in which he strenuously advocated the principle that "the Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all the day from such employments and recreations as are lawful on other days."

This speech appears to have been attacked by the *Globe.* The character of the attack we gather from the generous reply of the *Witness,* the opening paragraph of which is as follows:—

"Our contemporary the *Globe* has been thrown into a state of perplexity and indignation by Dr. Begg's speech of Wednesday last on the subject of Sabbath observance. It is to our contemporary an insoluble problem that Dr. Begg, 'the well-known Radical reformer in matters political,' should appear as champion of 'an antiquated Toryism in matters ecclesiastical.' To bring the Doctor up to the level of modern enlightenment the usual counsels are given—counsels not now remarkable for novelty. The observance of the Sabbath is to be 'not in the letter,' as insisted on by Dr. Begg, but 'in the spirit,' as practised, we hope, by our contemporary. The people of Scotland are to be brought into a religious frame of mind, and made better men, in order that observance of the Sabbath may result, and 'the arm of the law' is not to be invoked. The frightful consequences of 'coercion' in connection with the Sabbath—Dr. Stark's statistics, of course—are then referred to, and the most unimaginative reader can picture to himself in what kind of virtually satirical flourishes the article winds up."

The *Witness* very fairly expresses his dissent from Dr. Begg's exclusion of the work of the scavenger from the class of "works of necessity and mercy." Dr. Begg vindicated its exclusion in a letter to the editor. His position was, that two rounds of the scavengers on Saturday would supersede the necessity of one on the Sabbath. I am not qualified to decide the question; and, indeed, there must always be questions of this kind which cannot be absolutely decided, and with respect to which the Christian conscience, enlightened by the Word of God, must judge of the whole circumstances. The concluding paragraph of the *Witness* article is important, as containing the view of a highly competent observer as to Dr. Begg's consistency, a question which was raised and discussed from time to time. It is as follows:—

"The problem as to Dr. Begg's political Radicalism and ecclesiastical Conservatism, which has perplexed the *Globe*, is not, as our readers hardly require to be told, insoluble. The union between earnest religion and uncompromising de-

votion to the cause of civil freedom is not strange or startling to Scotchmen. They have heard of men with the sword in one hand and the Bible in the other, to whom Scotland owes not only her Presbyterian Church government, but her national liberty. They might even hold that what has debased and endangered modern freedom is its severance from moral and religious truth. If the writer in the *Globe* could but see deep enough, he would learn that it is the very consistency and completeness of Dr. Begg's Liberalism which makes him earnest on behalf of the Scottish Sabbath. He knows that no nation is fit for freedom which is not steadied and calmed by the fear of God and the practice of religion; and while anxious that his countrymen should be politically enfranchised, he is only the more anxious that they should be able to use, and not abuse, their enfranchisement. He has, in many ways and on many occasions, demonstrated his zeal in promoting the physical welfare of the people of Scotland; and he finds nothing inconsistent in anxiety to advance their spiritual welfare. Were the physical reforms at which Dr. Begg aims fairly carried out, most of even the apparent arguments against Sabbath observance on the part of the working classes would fall away."

To me this seems to be a complete vindication of the consistency of political Liberalism with ecclesiastical Conservatism. But as to the actual case, had I been charged with Dr. Begg's defence, I should have maintained that he never was politically a Radical, and that Sabbath observance is not an ecclesiastical question at all. As to the former branch of this assertion, it is, of course, true that Dr. Begg held many views which Radicals also hold; and in respect of social questions he constantly advocated Radical reform, while it is noticeable that almost the only opponents of some of these reforms were the leading Radicals of Edinburgh. But in politics, whenever he intermeddled with them, he uniformly held by what he considered to be Whig views, setting more by the Conservative than the Radical element of these views. If it be ecclesiastical Toryism to advocate the keeping holy

of the Lord's Day, then, without doubt, he was an ecclesiastical Tory, and so were, and so are, ninety-nine out of every hundred Christian men.

In this year the Social Science Association held its meeting in Liverpool. Dr. Begg read papers on his favourite subjects—Working Men's Houses (including, of course, the Bothy system), National Education, and the Poor Law. These papers created a great sensation. After the reading of the first, "Sir James Stephen expressed his extreme astonishment at the statements which it contained, and proposed that it should be sent to some public body in Scotland. A member moved, and another seconded, that the Social Science Association should call upon Parliament to interfere. A clergyman of the Church of England offered to commence a subscription by giving half-a-sovereign himself to send a copy of that remarkable paper to every member of Parliament. It was eventually resolved to bring the subject specially before the Council of the Association." With regard to Dr. Begg's other paper—that on national education—it is stated that it "led to a most animated discussion." The paper on the Poor Law appears to have been read near the close of the proceedings, and to have had less consideration accorded to it than it deserved.

At the half-yearly meeting of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, Dr. Begg, as convener of a committee, again brought up the subject of Houses for the Working Classes, and proposed an address to the landlords within the bounds, which was unanimously adopted, and which, in some cases, as I understand, was productive of immediate good results, while it certainly led to a fuller consideration of the subject, and to the formation of a public opinion, which have led to the almost total cure of the evil within the bounds, and to its great alleviation elsewhere.

It was about this time that Dr. Begg gave himself, heart and soul, to the promotion of a practical measure for the

accomplishment of this great object in our cities. I refer to the formation of societies for the advancement of money to working men to aid them in the erection or purchase of dwelling-houses. Owing to the great fluctuations in the price of house property, it is manifest that this work has to be carried on with great circumspection, and that a very considerable margin must be left on the amount of the loans as compared with the present estimated value of the houses. In point of fact, one at least of these societies has come to grief. But I understand that those which were promoted by Dr. Begg have been entirely successful, and have sustained no losses either by default or by depreciation of property. In his advocacy of these societies Dr. Begg was ever actuated by the conviction of the demoralising influences of such dwelling-places as alone were within the means of working men, and of the elevating influence of the thrift necessary to attain, and of the self-respect fostered by the actual attainment of proprietorship. The following short passage from a letter of 6th December 1858, gives his view in short compass:—"The time is past when the sympathies of intelligent men are to be confined to what are called 'the lapsed masses' of the community, whilst nothing is done to encourage and stimulate the energies of industrious and hard-working men. A higher philosophy begins to prevail. The main application, after all, of the maxim, 'Prevention is better than cure,' is to be found here. Help men that are willing to help themselves. Keep up those that are above the line of crime and pauperism, and stimulate them to rise higher and higher in the social scale, and you will do much to render other plans unnecessary, by cutting off pauperism and crime at their sources. Here also is the solution of many moral problems. Dr. Chalmers spoke of 'the expulsive power of a new affection;' and let our working men only become enamoured of a comfortable fireside which they can call their own, and be induced to save every penny for the accomplish-

ment of this object, and you will have one of the best securities, next to the grace of God, for their abandoning the dram-shop. Society itself will be gradually fixed on a firmer basis, and the public interest in every respect advanced, by the operation of such a system."

Such is a fair specimen of that "Radical reform in matters political" which the *Globe* represented Dr. Begg as advocating. Well, if this be Radicalism, a considerable number of us have been Radicals after the fashion in which one erewhile spoke prose—without being aware of the fact.

CHAPTER XLI.

ASSEMBLY REPRESENTATION—THIN END OF THE WEDGE —THEOLOGICAL CURRICULUM—GLASGOW COLLEGE CASE—LEVELLING UP OR LEVELLING DOWN—OPIUM QUESTION—REVIVALS—"PEGGING AT IT."

OVER and above a large amount of work done in connection with the ordinary business of the Church in the Presbytery, and with the work of the Reformation Society, and with the Forty Shilling Freehold movement, I do not find that Dr. Begg was occupied with any special subject during the earliest months of the year 1859. There was, however, a somewhat amusing incident connected with the election of commissioners to represent the Presbytery in the General Assembly. At the meeting in February "Sir H. Moncreiff gave notice that at next ordinary meeting he would probably move that in sending representatives to the General Assembly the system of rotation be adhered to, except as regarded two of the returns; and that Drs. Begg and Candlish should be returned out of order. He had not ascertained the consent of the parties he had named. Principal Cunningham, who was to be the next Moderator, would of course be returned." "Dr. Begg said that this notice of motion was, of course, given on Sir Henry's responsibility; for he begged it to be distinctly understood that he was not at all committed to a departure from the view which he held strongly on this subject for years past." When the matter came up at the March meeting, Sir Henry Moncreiff brought forward his motion. Dr. Clason moved that the rotation be adhered to, and

was seconded by Dr. Guthrie. Dr. Begg spoke as follows in favour of the amendment:—

"Dr. Begg, while he admitted that Sir Henry Moncreiff had made his proposal with the best motive, and with a view to the best interests of the Church, said that his (Dr. Begg's) opinions in favour of adhering rigidly to rotation, except on extraordinary emergencies, remained unchanged; and he therefore felt compelled to support Dr. Clason's motion. He was convinced that they had very much of late got into a plan of managing the Church by means of a number of individuals, in such a way as certainly interfered with the general feeling of liberty. There was an impression abroad, which he thought was well founded, that to a large extent the plan of deviating from the principle of rotation had the result of interfering most materially with the fair action of the Church; and this had produced a growing feeling of insecurity on the part of the provinces in reference to the General Assembly itself, and an impression that whatever view of any question was taken by a few individuals was always the view adopted by the General Assembly. The feeling was springing up that the General Assembly was under the power of a few individuals—a state of matters which might lead to consequences deeply to be regretted. He also saw, in consequence of the present state of matters, a tendency on the part of younger members of church courts to abstain from doing their duty by declining to come forward and take share in the public business of the Church. Seeing all these things, and wishing it to be understood that he entertained the most kindly feeling as well as the greatest admiration for the talents of Dr. Candlish, he confidently affirmed that the best course for the Presbytery to pursue at present was to adhere strictly to the principle of rotation."

Dr. Begg both spoke and voted against his own election; but Sir Henry Moncreiff's motion was carried by a majority of thirty-one to eighteen; and so he was elected in opposition to his own speech and vote. He was far too loyal a Presbyterian to hesitate for a moment as to the performance of the duty thus imposed on him. It may be thought by some that there was inconsistency in this, and that it would have been

better had he acted otherwise. This would have been so if the departure from rotation had been a wrong or incompetent act under the law of the Church. But it was not, and is not, so. The law of the Church, it is admitted, does not recognise rotation at all, or any limitation of perfectly free election. What I have always held is, that rotation should be made the law—with allowed and well-defined exceptions;—but while it is not so, I do not see that any one should refuse an appointment conferred on him in accordance with the existing law, or even refrain from seeking such appointment, if for any good reason it were thought desirable that he should be a member of a particular Assembly.

It is interesting to note the acting of the principle, *obsta principiis*, for the maintenance of which Dr. Begg was constantly ridiculed by some who found this an easier course than to answer him. Had others been as intelligent as he was in discerning "the thin edge of the wedge" of Romanism, the state of Ireland and of Britain might have been better than it is to-day. We find him, at a meeting of the Scottish Reformation Society, speaking thus:—

"Dr. Begg, after stating that the Society embraced men belonging to all the different denominations, and holding very different opinions even in regard to civil politics, and that, of course, they could not enter into details of political diversity of opinion, as the one ground upon which they were cordially united was the common one of Protestantism, and the maintenance of the essential principles of the British Constitution, from which they believed the liberties of this country had sprung, said that this General Election had come upon the country very much by surprise, and that it was to be regretted that Protestants were but too often taken by surprise in matters of this kind. They had, however, of late seen more and more clearly that every one was bound to struggle for the maintenance of this great cause which this Society had so much at heart, unless he were prepared to say that that cause should be entirely swamped by all the different classes of politicians who might be alternately at

the helm of affairs. They had observed recently, even in connection with the existing Government,[1] the manner in which the Romish party in Parliament brought their combined influence to bear upon the promotion of their own objects in the midst of political contentions. For it was when the recent contest in Parliament was about to take place that that party waited upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer with the object of securing a royal charter for a new University in Dublin, or, in other words, the right of dispensing honours in the Queen's name, although they had Maynooth in the immediate neighbourhood of that city. They were favourably received by the Chancellor, and the ultimate issue was, that in the recent vote eleven members of the Romish Church, who were generally found voting on the other side, walked across the floor to give their votes in support of the existing Government. This was just an illustration of the way in which the Romanists subordinated every other view and principle to the one grand object of securing the advancement of their own system."

Compare *then* and *now*. Then it was, Give us the right to call our lads B.A. and our priests D.D. and our prominent laymen LL.D., and it will be a gain to you of twenty-two votes in the House of Commons. To-day, as I write, all Britain is in suspense, and almost in trepidation, over the demand of the same party for an Irish Parliament, and the guarantee of an enormous sum of money for agrarian purposes; and the price that is offered to the party which will grant it is 172 votes, far more than enough to convert a minority into a great majority. But those who then hinted that the thin edge of the wedge had a thicker end behind it were stigmatised as alarmists and fanatics.

It is not often that in the consideration of a "case" in our ecclesiastical courts views and tendencies on ecclesiastical principles are very distinctly brought out. But such a case occasionally occurs. Such an one occurred in the Presbytery of Edinburgh when a proposal was made to apply to the General Assembly to grant permission to take Mr. Thomas

[1] That of Lord Derby and Mr. D'Israeli.—T. S.

Cochrane on trial for license in order that he might become minister of a territorial church in Edinburgh, although Mr. Cochrane had not gone through the whole of the prescribed curriculum of study. Three very distinct tendencies were brought out in the course of the discussion which ensued. There were those who made light of the curriculum and its prescription; those who deemed that it should be held inviolate in every case; and those who maintained that it should be held as the rule, from which, indeed, exceptions should not be lightly allowed, but that the Church should be free to judge every case of proposed exception on its own merits. I have always felt very strongly that the prescription of a curriculum for its own guidance was competent to the Church, with a view to all things "being done decently and in order." But I have as strenuously maintained that no Church has a right to bind itself never to dispense with that curriculum. In fact, the curriculum is altogether indefensible excepting with the condition annexed that it may be dispensed with in any case on good cause shown. Such was Mr. Cochrane's case, and his great success has fully justified the course adopted.

It has been stated that Dr. Begg, in opposition to his own speech and vote, was a member of the General Assembly of 1859. He, of course, took a prominent part in the business and the discussions. As Convener of the Committee on Houses for the Working Classes he gave in a long and able report, and addressed the Assembly at great length on the subject. His speech was one of great importance, and undoubtedly produced no small effect on public opinion respecting one of the most pressing social questions of our time. I must content myself with giving a specimen of the humour with which he enlivened the discussion of a grave—it might almost be said a solemn—subject:—

"It is further suggested that perhaps the idea of economy lay at the foundation of the change; inasmuch as, while

farmers saw the desirability of preventing the death of their cattle by providing suitable accommodation for them, there were no immediate pecuniary penalties connected with any arrangement they might make for their servants. I do not say that this was a matter of deliberate calculation, but unless men clearly see that their own interest is involved they are not very ready to make such arrangements. I remember a story in a newspaper about an American slave, whose master wanted him to climb a dangerous ascent, and who excused himself by saying, 'Massa, I would strongly advise you to send up an Irishman. If you send me, and I fall, it will cost you 800 dollars; but if you send the Irishman, and he falls, it will cost you nothing.' In an interesting letter I had from a ploughman he says—'Sometimes our masters allow us to plough in the worst of weather, except,' says he, 'when it comes on thunder and lightning, and then he says, "Lads, ye may gang in, for the horses 'll be killed."'"

There was a very exciting debate in this Assembly on what was called the "Glasgow College Case." The late Dr. Gibson had to complain of a certain measure of insubordination on the part of a section of his students, which he regarded as connected with a "broad" tendency on their part. After much angry controversy in the Glasgow Senatus, the Glasgow Presbytery, the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, the College Committee, and the Commission of the General Assembly, the matter came at last before the Assembly itself. Four motions were made, by Dr. Candlish, Dr. Begg, Dr. Julius Wood, and Mr. Mather of Stanley respectively; but the first and fourth were withdrawn, and the vote was taken between Dr. Begg's motion and Dr. Wood's, when the latter was carried by a majority of two to one (246–124). The motions voted on did not differ very materially from each other. Of those withdrawn, the one was a virtual condemnation of the professor, and the other of the students. It is worthy of notice that up to this time there was no special agreement between Dr. Gibson and Dr. Begg. They were heartily at one on matters relating to popery, but they were widely

apart on the question of national education. From this time, however, not only did Dr. Gibson and Dr. Begg act earnestly in concert on all public questions, but Dr. Wood also was their hearty coadjutor. No men in the Free Church, or in any Church, were ever more closely united by mutual affection and esteem, and by a general concord of sentiment and view.

Dr. Begg gave in the report of the Committee on Popery. After stating the rapid multiplication of Romish institutions, and the support given to popery by national grants, amounting in the aggregate to upwards of £186,000, and the presentation to every Romanist soldier of a copy of "The Garden of the Soul," the report referred to other measures of the same kind, regretted the general apathy of Protestants, and recommended the Church to take a much greater interest in the matter. The Convener, founding on these topics, in a lengthened and able address referred to the apathy existing in regard to this subject, and observed that it seemed to be intimated the other evening by one speaker that this apathy does not exist, though the contrary was not shown. This reminded him of a story which used to be told of a man who sold a parrot, and the price being good, another, who had a crow, brought it into the market. He was asked, "But can it speak?" "No," he replied; "but it thinks a great deal." He further gave forth an emphatic condemnation of "concurrent endowment." "For himself, he would rather that the civil magistrate should wash his hands altogether of endowing any branch of the Church than that he should confound truth and falsehood, and maintain on the one hand idolatry, whilst on the other he is professing to maintain the truth of God."

From this, and other similar utterances which Dr. Begg gave forth from time to time, attempts have been made, and will probably be made again, to convict him of a tendency to Voluntaryism, or at least of inconsistency in his support of anti-Voluntary views. Such attempts I consider to be unwar-

ranted. The most that he ever said was, that he would prefer disendowment all round to endowment all round *if there were a necessity of adopting one or other of these courses.* But I am not aware that he ever admitted, or ever believed in, the existence of such a necessity.

The only other subject that Dr. Begg brought before the Assembly was the opium traffic with China. He had evidently given much attention to the subject, and was able to make a most impressive statement as to the evil effects which the introduction of the drug was producing on the physical and moral condition of the people. It is scarcely necessary to say that the Assembly unanimously adopted his motion to memorialise the Government on the subject. Alas that the evil still remains unchecked!

As might have been expected, the bothy question gave rise to a good deal of newspaper discussion. Some letters on the subject are strikingly characteristic of their writers. The late Lord Kinnaird wrote as a good and earnest man, acknowledging the evils, but apprehending the difficulty—mainly on financial grounds—of the total suppression of the system, and therefore advocating the lessening of the evils by the introduction of various improvements. Mr. (now Sir) J. G. Tollemache Sinclair wrote two long letters equally characteristic of him. He advises the occupants of bothies to duck Dr. Begg if he should come to prosecute inquiries, speaks of "*begging* the question," and characterises Dr. Begg's action as "more worthy of a freebooter than a Free Churchman." These and such-like things did not greatly move Dr. Begg.

The year 1859 was the epoch of a great religious movement, which has come to be well known as the "Irish revival." Dr. Begg was one of the deputies sent by the Free Church Assembly to the Assembly of the Irish Presbyterian Church. He was an earnest observer of the strange occurrences, and was thoroughly convinced that the movement was a remarkable work of grace. So much was he

interested in it, that he returned to Ireland at the close of the summer, and I find his name frequently mentioned as preaching or taking part in meetings. In the August Commission of the Free Church an Irish deputation gave an account of the progress of the work. Dr. Begg, who seems to have returned from Ireland only that morning, addressed the Commission in a speech, which it seems necessary to give in full, in order that his relation to that and other movements may be rightly apprehended :—

"Dr. Begg said he had no intention of detaining the Commission at this late hour of the night, but he did not consider that he would be doing justice to himself were he not to make one or two observations after the interesting addresses to which they had listened. He left Ireland only last night, and, therefore, probably was the last returned of the many visitors who had gone from this country to witness the wonderful work of God which they had heard so fully and eloquently described. He had been eight days in Ireland, and had witnessed the work with intense delight, and could therefore amply confirm the statements which had been made to-night, and which to some might appear almost incredible. To show the great anxiety to engage in prayer and take part in devotional exercises, he might mention that the very first thing that struck him on landing at Belfast was the meeting which he attended at mid-day on the part of the girls at the mills. These girls had three-quarters of an hour of interval, and one-half of that was daily spent in a prayer-meeting; and the first one that he attended was conducted by one of the clerks at the mill. In other places he was present at meetings which were protracted to a very late hour; and he was importuned to preach a sermon after ten o'clock at night, and another minister preached another sermon after that. No later than yesterday he preached in a small country village in the north of Ireland, almost within sight of Scotland, to a large congregation; and although it was in the very midst of the harvest, the people left their harvest labours to come and hear the gospel. In addition to what had been already stated, he might observe that the singing at the meetings which he had attended was something quite

wonderful. Such a volume of sweet sound, poured forth from full hearts, he had never heard before. Several instances had come under his own notice of persons who had been converted. He had a conversation, for example, with a man who had been a notorious infidel, a man of great ability, and who had devoted his strength and energy to the propagation of infidelity. That man told him that he was a great reader of infidel books, and that he had been praying to be instructed in order that he might write and speak against Christianity with more effect; and yet that man, by a very simple process, apparently under the Omnipotent Spirit of God, had been arrested, and had been so entirely changed that he now devoted himself with more energy to persuading the men around him to flee to Christ for refuge. The Reverend Doctor also briefly referred to interviews which he had had with Arians, who now acknowledged the Supreme Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and had become converted; and also with a great many converted Romanists, who said that they formerly believed that the priest had the power to forgive sins, and had prayed to the Virgin Mary and the saints and angels, but now saw through their error, and believed that Jesus Christ alone could save the guilty. One of these cases was that of a Romanist, a most intelligent person, who had blasphemed against this movement, and had opposed it to the very uttermost; and yet he was arrested, and was completely changed, regularly attending public worship. There could not be the slightest doubt, in his opinion, in the mind of any man who regulated his belief by the Word of God, that one of the most wonderful works had been accomplished in the north of Ireland that had taken place since the day of Pentecost. He had the greatest sympathy with a statement which fell from a preceding speaker, that the work of the Holy Spirit had been too little preached among them, and that the power of the Holy Spirit in converting sinners had been far too little acknowledged; and this was one of the grand lessons which they ought to learn from the experience of their brethren in Ireland. After stating that he had found the very children in Ireland holding prayer-meetings, conducted by themselves, and that he had never listened to more simple and earnest pleading than from the lips of a boy, Dr. Begg concluded by saying that the brethren who had addressed them had

desired their prayers. He thought it rather behoved the people of this land most earnestly to ask for the prayers of the brethren in Ireland; and he could tell them that at this moment there were a multitude of praying people in the north of Ireland pleading on behalf of Scotland."

Dr. Begg's interest in this movement was not evanescent. I find in the newspapers numerous notices of meetings held in his church, at which he either gave notices of the progress of the work, or introduced other speakers who did so. Also in the *Children's Missionary Record* of the Free Church (November 1859) I find the following interesting paragraph:—

"In Glasgow also there is manifested an earnest spirit of prayerfulness. Up to 8th October there were twelve public prayer-meetings held every day, and sixty-six others in all on the various evenings throughout the week. In Edinburgh, in some congregations, there is a deep and growing earnestness. Many meetings are held for prayer, one of the most interesting being that in Newington Free Church (Dr. Begg's), where, every Tuesday evening, the minister gives tidings also of the progress of the work of God."

I may say that, although subsequently Dr. Begg, rightly or wrongly, considered himself precluded from taking part in certain revival movements by his disapproval of some of the methods of conducting the services connected with them, he never ceased to take the warmest interest in the revival of religion in his own Church and country, and in other Churches and other lands.

It needs scarcely be said that Dr. Begg continued unremittingly his exertions in opposition to Romanism, Sabbath traffic, and the bothy system. It is almost amusing to read the accounts in the newspapers of the day, of his constant assaults upon these evils, and to notice the way in which he conducted the assaults. He believed in reiteration, and never shrank from repeating again and again the same arguments, and even the same words. He was a thorough believer in Abraham Lincoln's dictum as to the necessity, in order to succeed in any matter, of "keeping pegging at it."

CHAPTER XLII.

CARDROSS CASE—FATAL ACCIDENT—TERCENTENARY OF THE REFORMATION—CROWDING IN HOUSES—PRISON CHAPLAINS—BOTHY SYSTEN—SYRIAN MASSACRE—UNIVERSITY REFORM.

In the years that have been under our review in some chapters preceding, and in the years following them, the great question at issue as to the position of the Free Church in relation to the civil authorities and civil courts—a question which necessarily involved the relations of all Churches, established or non-established, to these authorities and courts—was that involved in the "Cardross Case." I have hitherto made but the scantiest reference to that case; and at present I only state that a special meeting of the Commission of the General Assembly was held in January 1860 for the consideration of it, and that Dr. Begg made the best speech in the discussion. From this speech I extract a few characteristic passages, not referring to the history or actual position of the case:—"It is instructive to observe how this extraordinary claim has been received by various classes of persons in this country. In the first place, it is very instructive to notice that there is a large number of people in the country who seem to have an idea of the infallibility of the Court of Session. Take thirty-five men dressed in black coats and white neckcloths; they are all men who have passed through a course of study and stood a scrutiny of character. They meet together to discuss questions in connection with the Divine Word. These men have repudiated the idea of infallibility in the Popish sense,

and no one thinks for a moment of attributing it to them. But then four men come. They are otherwise dressed; and they discuss questions in such a way as to prove clearly that they are not infallible, because they contradict themselves, and they contradict all that have gone before them; and yet so besotted are many of the people of this country that they will actually attribute infallibility to the four, or something like it, and are prepared to swallow all their claims, however extravagant." Then came a terrible attack upon certain supporters of the Established Church, who, rightly or wrongly, were believed to be not sorry that the Free Church had got, as they supposed, into a "fix."

At the annual meeting of the Scottish Reformation Society in February Dr. Begg was able to report the doing of not a little good work directly, and the exertion of a salutary influence in resistance to threatened evils. He dwelt specially on the good effected by the lectureship of Dr. Wylie in connection with the Society, which owed its existence mainly to him, and which has ever since continued to do valuable service in connection with the Protestant Institute, to which it was subsequently transferred.

On this subject a report was read at the March Commission of Assembly regarding the celebration of the tercentenary of the Reformation. The report bears the signature of Dr. Begg as convener of the committee, but, in his absence, was read by the clerk. Its recommendations, which were substantially acted on, were—(1.) That a day should be occupied by the General Assembly in commemoration of God's goodness in the Scottish Reformation. (2.) That on that day addresses should be delivered by men designated for the purpose, on subjects connected with the Reformation. (3.) That these addresses should be followed by free conversations, and interspersed with devotional exercises. (4.) That the Assembly should instruct ministers to preach special sermons on the subject on the Sabbath preceding the 20th of December.

And (5.) That at these services collections should be made on behalf of the fund for the institution and endowment of the Protestant Institute.

Dr. Begg's absence from the meeting of the March Commission is accounted for by the following short paragraph, which appears in the *Witness* of the 24th of that month :—

"THE REV. DR. BEGG.—Our readers will regret to learn that, in consequence of the state of his health, Dr. Begg has been advised to repair to the Isle of Wight for a short time. He left Edinburgh a few days ago for this more genial climate."

There are many Edinburgh citizens, and probably some Edinburgh ministers, whom a tolerably slight indisposition would be sufficient to banish from their "own romantic town" during the prevalence of the east winds of March. But a sense of duty, and his intense affection for the Newington congregation, combined with a certain kind of pride, led Dr. Begg to great constancy in sticking to his post. We may be sure, therefore, that it was real indisposition that caused his withdrawal at this time. It was probably a return of that throat affection under which he suffered while at Liberton. But while there is no doubt that the indisposition was real, it does not seem to have been severe. Perhaps, as I have suggested, it was local, and disqualified him from speaking, while it did not prevent his writing. At all events, we find him, within a fortnight after his leaving Edinburgh, addressing a letter to the Prime Minister (Lord Palmerston) on the subject of the census which fell to be taken in 1861. His object was to urge the Government to utilise the census as a means of obtaining much important information respecting the condition of the people. Especially he urged that returns should be demanded of the number of apartments in each inhabited house. If I recollect aright, the arrangements for the English census were in such forwardness that they could not be altered for that time; but

that Dr. Begg's suggestions were adopted with reference to the Scottish census. In point of fact the census elicited a great amount of very valuable statistical information.

I must revert to a subject to which some may consider that I give disproportionate space. I refer to the order of election of commissioners to the General Assembly. At the meeting of the Presbytery of Edinburgh on the 28th of March the representatives were appointed strictly in order of rotation. But two of the commissioners having intimated their inability to attend, a second election took place on the 25th of April. On that occasion it was proposed that the rotation should be still adhered to, the two ministers next on the roll being appointed in room of the two who had resigned. It was also moved that Dr. Begg should be appointed along with the one who was next in order of rotation. The former motion was carried by a majority of 3 (14–11), and so Dr. Begg was not a member of Assembly in 1860. In the report of the discussion I find that I spoke and voted in favour of the motion which was carried, and complained that the proposal of Dr. Begg's name put me and others in the invidious position of appearing to vote in opposition to the election of so distinguished a man and so close a friend. The day after this meeting of the Presbytery Dr. Begg returned home, and on the day following wrote thus to the *Witness*:—

"TO THE EDITOR OF THE *WITNESS*.

"SIR,—It is perhaps due to myself to say that I was not in the least aware that any proposal was to be made to send me to the Assembly this year in violation of the ordinary rotation, and that, had I been present, I should certainly have voted against it. I hope the position of the Presbytery is now finally taken up, viz., that except in cases of obvious emergency, of which the present is not one, the plan of rotation should be strictly adhered to. Unless this rule is adopted, I see nothing before the Church but a struggle, already begun elsewhere, to get rid of the representative

system altogether. As to myself, even had it been my turn to go to the Assembly, I should have been unfortunately under the necessity of declining at present the laborious honour.—I am, &c."

The closing sentence of this letter intimates that its writer's health was not quite restored. That is further confirmed by the circumstance that, although he had returned to Scotland, he did not immediately resume work in Newington, but went for a time to Bridge of Allan, a place whither he often repaired, and advised his friends to repair, when he or they required "a change." His being at Bridge of Allan is mentioned in the newspapers in connection with a very melancholy accident which occurred in his house in Edinburgh on the 14th of May. One of his servants was carrying a shovelful of live coals from the kitchen in order to light the fire in the dining-room. She dropped some of the coals, and on stooping to pick them up, set fire to the skirt of her dress. Although she was speedily wrapped in a rug by a fellow-servant, she died at once, from the shock, I suppose, rather than the burning. Mrs. Begg heard the screams, and was instantly on the spot, assisting in the efforts to extinguish the flames; but the poor girl died in her hands. She immediately summoned a medical gentleman, and telegraphed to Dr. Begg, who returned to Edinburgh by the first train. This sad occurrence made a deep and lasting impression on Dr. Begg's mind. He often referred to it with manifest emotion. It was a painful feeling that a member of his household had lost her life in his house and in doing his work. Both Mrs. Begg and he had repeatedly charged the servants never to carry fire from one apartment to another; and when the fatal accident occurred there was an abundant supply of fire-lighters in the servant's possession. But on that particular morning she was somewhat later than usual, and thinking that she would thus make up for lost time, she unhappily had recourse to the forbidden expedient.

It has been mentioned that Dr. Begg was not a member of the Assembly of 1860. But he was one of those appointed to address the Assembly on the subject of Romanism in connection with the tercentenary of the Scottish Reformation. The Moderator (Dr. Robert Buchanan) introduced him to the Assembly in graceful terms, as follows:—"The Moderator was sure that they all wished, with him, that the day were longer and their strength greater, in order to hear some esteemed brethren from a distance. But the Assembly would not excuse him if he forgot that his esteemed friend Dr. Begg, who had been obliged for a considerable number of weeks to absent himself from his ordinary sphere of labour, and had come down to the Assembly at great risk to his health, to discharge the duty entrusted to him, had claims on the House which did not warrant him in detaining Dr. Begg longer; and he hoped that other brethren, knowing the circumstances, would appreciate the desirability of hearing Dr. Begg now." He was most cordially received by the Assembly, and delivered a speech thoroughly characteristic of his usual style of oratory. There is in it no single reference to the learned arguments by which Romanism is usually assailed or defended; no elaborate research into historical documents; and no attempt at the exposition of prophetic and apocalyptic Scriptures which are understood to predict the ultimate downfall of the Romish apostasy. In these respects the speech may, in the judgment of some, be regarded as in unfavourable contrast with some of the orations delivered on the same occasion. But it was thoroughly practical, referring to the eneregtic efforts of the Romanists to nullify the Reformation, and to the measures which should be adopted in opposition to their efforts. He referred specially to the Protestant Institute. "Ten years ago some of us started what we call a Protestant Institute, that is to say, a machinery by which to give such instructions to all who may avail themselves of it, but particularly to students and

teachers. We have been collecting more or less ever since; but I need not disguise the fact that Dr. Candlish and myself, and a few more, have now incurred the responsibility of having that Institute finished at the earliest possible period." The conclusion of the speech was as follows:—

"The times are most momentous in my mind, and no one can tell what a short period may bring forth. I have no idea that we are to get quit so speedily of this great system as some seem to imagine. It may not be in our day; it may not be in our children's day; but one thing I would say—and the reason of it, I think, will be universally admitted—Don't lay down your arms until the battle is closed. We have here representatives of Presbyterianism from all parts of the world. We have men who know the gigantic struggle which Rome is making in our colonies as well as at home. Let it go forth from this Assembly that we are, in the strength of God, determined never to rest until we either find the system overthrown or until we ourselves lay down our weapons by going to the home appointed for all living. The battle may be protracted, but the issue is sure.

'Rome shall perish; write her guilt
In the blood which she hath spilt.'

And when she goes down into her dishonoured grave, then the Church will enter into the glory of her millennial reign. I conclude by adapting a few lines from a Transatlantic poet to the blessed and happy anticipation:—

"And then from sea to sea
Shall loud Hosannas ring;
Unnumbered spirits free
Shall joyous anthems sing.
The hardened earth no more
Shall groan beneath the load,
But hold her onward course
Beneath the smile of God."

Dr. Begg also gave in the report of his Committee on Houses for the Working Classes, and delivered a long and eloquent speech on the subject. After an elaborate analysis of the returns of the Registrar-General in regard to illegitimacy,

with a view of showing the connection between immorality and the bothy system, he strongly advocated the extension of the crofter system.[1] On this subject, which is of so great present interest, he said:—"One of the incidental advantages of this system, besides rendering bothies unnecessary, is, that it forms a link between the two classes, enabling ploughmen to rise in the world like all other classes of society. . . . It seems to me that this is the real solution of the problem. Have as large farms as you like; have farms bearing the same relation to the grounds [?] as the Great Eastern does to other ships. But the Great Eastern has a small steamer hung on her side, and many other small boats. And so in the same way let us have crofts and small farms interspersed between these large farms. This will do much to cure an intolerable evil, and to raise that class of men in Scotland who were its glory in former days. Go back to the time of the Covenanters, who fought the great battle of liberty in this country, and you will find that they consisted of this very class of men, of small properties, but with stout hearts and strong arms. These were the men that bore aloft the flag in the days of the Covenant; and I am persuaded that, by the diffusion of this class among the community, we shall do much to restore the state of things which existed in former days. But, then, what is to be done with the town districts? I am persuaded that if the rural districts were once put right, the problem in regard to the cities would become a far simpler one. If men who come from the rural districts come to our cities in a state of social degradation, instead of coming pure and vigorous and infusing a healthy life into the community, they simply aid the corruption and the degradation. . . . There is a very affecting instance mentioned in the Report, which shows that the evil is spreading

[1] So called in those days, but not exactly the system which is now known by that name. What he advocated was, the allocation to farm-servants of small crofts which they could cultivate in the evenings.—T. S.

to our villages and county towns. In the town of Hawick one of our elders mentioned that in one of the streets there are forty-two single apartments, measuring 12 × 14 feet, and that there were living in these 347 human beings. 347 divided by 42 gives an average of nearly eight persons to each of these small rooms; and in one of them fourteen individuals found a home! We all thought it was an exaggeration when it was mentioned, in regard to St. Giles' in London, that there were five Irish families in one room, one in each corner and one in the middle. When asked how they contrived to breathe in such a place, an Irishman said, 'We got on very well till the gentleman in the middle took in a lodger, and then we had great difficulty in getting along.' But here we have fourteen in one room, and this is about as good as the Irishman's habitation after all. I understand that if the state of Galashiels were compared with the state of Hawick, a very striking contrast would be found. And the reason is simply this, that a great landlord in the one place allows the people to build houses, and a great landlord in the other will not allow them to build them. . . . He then observed that this was called the age of progress and the march of intellect, but unfortunately it was to a great extent a backward progress; and it was high time that, looking at the matter from a high moral and spiritual platform, and seeing its bearing upon the moral and everlasting interests of the people, they should lift up their voices, and should rack their ingenuity for the purpose of applying a remedy to the cause of these evils. . . . He then went on to say that they must come more in contact with the people themselves, and tell them plainly that, if they were to be lifted up, they must labour to lift up themselves. They could, many of them, out of the money which they now spend on drink and tobacco, furnish themselves with houses; and in this respect they were far behind their brethren in England."

It may be said, of course—it often has been said—that this is mere enthusiasm, and the expression of a vain imagination. But it is not so. No doubt the population of our cities is constantly increasing by influx from the country, and the increase of accommodation does not keep pace with the increase of population, so that the deficiency is probably not less, if it be not even greater, than it was in former days. But a very great deal has been done, on the lines laid down by Dr. Begg, to stay the indefinite increase of the evil. Many hundreds of families in Edinburgh inhabit comfortable houses, built or purchased from their own savings through that method of co-operation which Dr. Begg was one of the first in Scotland to recommend. Not only so; but any one may see a very considerable number of handsome villas—not a few of them among the handsomest of our suburban mansions—with unpronounceable Gaelic names engraven on their cornice-stones or on their gate-plates. A large proportion of these have been built by men who came to our city with no exceptional advantages, from crofter-homes in our Highlands and Islands, and have called their houses, not "after their own names," but after the names of the homes of their childhood.

In June Dr. Begg took the leading part in a public meeting held in Edinburgh with a view to securing that the general census of 1861 should be as complete as possible. In moving the resolutions he dwelt on the subject of overcrowding, and urged that the census schedule should contain a column stating the number of apartments in the several houses, and the number of children attending school. He brought the same matter also before the Edinburgh Presbytery, and treated it much in the same way.

At a subsequent meeting of Presbytery Dr. Begg introduced the subject of prison chaplains. The law was, that the chaplains should belong to the Established Church. But it had not been rigidly acted on; and, in point of

fact, not a few of the best chaplains had been Free Churchmen. At this time a bill had been introduced into Parliament for the amendment of the Act, from which the restrictive clause had been dropped. An agitation had ensued on the ground that thus Romish priests would be eligible; and on that ground the dropped clause had been restored in the House of Commons, and so the Bill went to the House of Lords. Dr. Begg took ground which many of his friends will be surprised to find him occupying. "Considering (he said) the state of things in Scotland, it was a most unjust arrangement that public institutions, which were supported by all classes of the community, should only have chaplains in connection with the Established Church. . . . He did not think that the mere possibility of the appointment of a Popish priest should prevent the Bill being made according to what justice required. If the Government or any of the Boards made any such appointment, they would be responsible; but the possibility of the Government doing a wrong thing ought not to prevent their urging a right thing. It seemed to him that they ought to renew the effort made by the General Assembly of their Church in connection with the progress of the Bill through the House of Lords, and the petition that the clause limiting the chaplaincies of prisons to ministers of the Established Church should be abolished, and that matters should be open, as was originally intended when the Bill was introduced. He would not object if it were limited to Protestants, but he would rather a thousand times that it were open entirely than that it were confined to the Established Church." I quote this strong statement because I have no right to suppress it. But I do not think that Dr. Begg would have made it at a later period. I believe that he made it now not because his zeal against Romanism was less now than it was at any time, but because he had less fear that such an appointment would ever be made. It will be seen that his

position on this matter was in close accordance with that on the subject of religious education. At no time did he waver in his desire for religious education, and at no time did he cease to regard the payment of Romish priests by the nation as a great evil. But he had more faith now than afterwards in the influence of sound public opinion for the promotion of good and the prevention of evil.

That his "heart-hatred of Popery" never waned is made manifest by his speech delivered at the great meeting held in Edinburgh on the 14th of August, in celebration of the tercentenary of the Reformation—a speech which I should be glad if I could give at length; a speech interesting, not only as attesting the steadfastness of Dr. Begg's Protestantism, but in a subordinate degree as illustrating the way in which all the subjects which occupied his thoughts were linked together in his mind. It was perfectly natural for him to associate with the glorious Reformation of the sixteenth century the abolition of the bothy system, the allocation of crofts in the country, and the provision of comfortable houses in towns for the working classes. They were all, in his view, closely connected parts of a great system of means for the glory of God and the well-being of men.

In connection with this tercentenary commemoration was laid the foundation-stone of the Protestant Institute, which owed its erection mainly to him. The arrangements of the ceremonial were made by him; but he did not himself take any prominent part in it. The interest of the commemoration was greatly enhanced by the presence of Father Chiniquy, a notable man with whom Dr. Begg ever felt a lively sympathy. In September of this year the Social Science Association met in Glasgow. Dr. Begg read a paper, and took part in a lively discussion, on the Bothy System. There does not seem to have been anything new in the paper:—How could there have been?—but in the discussion which followed its author had an opportunity of meeting

the various objections which were brought to the abolition of the system. Mr. Murray Dunlop had by this time succeeded in carrying through Parliament a bill empowering the corporations of towns to remove as nuisances houses which had become dilapidated and unfit for human habitation. In a leader on "Our Bothies," a few weeks later, the *Witness* referred to Dr. Begg's paper. I extract a few sentences:—"The question suggests itself, Are these two things—high farming and bothies—so connected that we must have both or neither? To this question Dr. Begg addressed himself in his singularly lucid paper before the Social Science Association at its Glasgow meeting. With that argumentative skill which is peculiar to him, he completely demolished the position that the bothy is an essential element in our agricultural progress, and traced to this system, as one of its main causes, that frightful train of evils which is coming in upon our country, the decay of our thrift and sobriety, and the lowering of that virtue which gave us our former renown among the nations. 'A return to the former system of lodging ploughmen in the house of the farmer,' the Doctor remarked, 'was what no one proposed. The question simply was between the erection of suitable cottages for ploughmen, where they may marry if they please, like other working men, and the present miserable system of huddling five, six, or eight ploughmen into a miserable hut called a bothy, as a cheap residence, to the ruin of their morals, and of the best interests of the country. The bothy system does not exist in Mid-Lothian, and yet there the farming is as high as in any district of Scotland. Does not this prove that there is no necessary connection between the two, and that the system is born of a short-sighted economy, which is destroying the peasantry meanwhile, and will destroy, in the long run, that high farming which the bothy is intended to promote?'"

In the month of October a series of evangelistic services

on a large scale was held in Edinburgh. As I happened to have a good deal to do with the arrangements for conducting these services, I may mention that Dr. Begg prudently declined, on account of the state of his throat, to address any meeting in the open air. But he took a prominent part in meetings which were held in his own church and in several other churches.

At the meeting of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale in November Dr. Begg proposed three overtures to the Assembly, one on Social Evils, one on the Reformation, and one on Additional Classes in the Faculties of Arts in the Universities. The last of these overtures related to a matter in which he long took a deep interest. He felt, and we all feel, that by the present arrangement it is almost indispensable that young men should make up their minds to study for the ministry at a very immature age. He therefore proposed that arrangements should be made for evening classes in the undergraduate course of the Universities, so that young men actually in business might attend them, and so be freed from the necessity of committing themselves to study for the ministry until they should be better able to estimate the solemn responsibility of such committal.

About this time occurred what was called the Syrian massacre. The tidings that "150 towns and villages had been burned, 10,000 Christians killed, 3000 women sold as slaves, and 70,000 or 80,000 people left homeless or starving" could not be heard without emotion. A meeting was held in Edinburgh, with the view of aiding the Syrian Relief Fund which was being raised in England. Dr. Begg was one of the speakers. His speech on this occasion was characteristic. The perpetrators of the outrages were the Druses, who hate Mohammedans as cordially as they hate Christians. But in Dr. Begg's estimate the Druse and the Mohammedan were simply anti-Christians, who "made it of the essence of their religion to destroy those who differed from them, and

especially to destroy Christians." Dr. Begg was perfectly right in all that he said in condemnation of Mohammedans; and he might have said a great deal more and been right still. But it must be admitted that it was not quite relevant to introduce this condemnation into a speech designed to express horror at deeds which were not perpetrated by them, but by those who would as gladly have made *them* their victims if they had dared. With this flaw, however, the speech of Dr. Begg was a good one.

In the Presbytery of Edinburgh, at the close of November, an important discussion took place, although it led to no immediate action. The tests for professors in the Universities had been abolished. So much of the patronage of the Edinburgh chairs as had been in the hands of the Town Council of Edinburgh had been in 1858 taken from the Council and lodged in the hands of a body of curators representing the Town Council and the University Court, while the patronage of the chairs of which the Crown was patron in all the Universities had been left untouched. Mr. Martin, in the Edinburgh Presbytery, proposed an overture "that the General Assembly take into serious consideration whether the Church has any duty, and if so, what, in reference to the appointment of professors to the chairs in the Faculties of Arts in the Universities of Scotland." Mr. Martin supported his overture in an exceedingly able speech, and was seconded by Dr. Begg. I notice Dr. Begg's speech merely for the purpose of calling attention to the sagacity with which he anticipated a movement which has since been taken up by others, and is now actually in progress.

"He had no doubt that if there were a general concurrence on the part of the people, an immense deal could be done towards promoting the higher education in Scotland by means of bequests that might be made available for that purpose. They might take, for example, the case of the Heriot Schools, where they had established this principle,

that the will of a man might be so far annulled as to adapt his bequest to the altered circumstances of the country; and so that which was intended to be a purely monastic institution was now made available for the purposes of education in Edinburgh. There were large additional funds in existence that had never been used for any educational purpose. These could be had, no doubt, with the consent of Parliament, and with the general concurrence of the people, and devoted to the purpose of promoting the higher education. There might be fellowships in connection with Heriot's School,[1] to the extent, say, of £1000, for the most deserving young men educated at it;[1] and the bequest of Sir William Fettes—over half a million—might be devoted to the same purpose. It seemed to him that very much might be done by the Church in promoting the higher education, and in the way of so guarding her own peculiar province as to make sure that that higher education should not be adulterated, in so far as their own ministry was concerned."

Whether recent and present movements were to any extent suggested by this speech I do not know. But they have been and are precisely in the direction indicated by the speech.

[1] Qu. "Schools" . . . . "them."—T .S.

CHAPTER XLIII.

CARDROSS CASE—CHURCH EXTENSION—NATIONAL EDUCATION—CAUSEWAYSIDE MISSION—AUSTRALIAN UNION—EDUCATIONAL REFORM—HIGHLANDS—PROTESTANT INSTITUTE—MISSIONARY CONFERENCE—FALL OF HOUSE IN HIGH STREET—DEATH OF DR. CUNNINGHAM.

At the beginning of the year 1861 the Committee on the Cardross Case issued a "circular to ministers," signed by Dr. Begg, as convener of the committee. Internal evidence shows that it is substantially the production of the convener. It sets forth very clearly the principles involved in the case.

The dissensions on the administration of the Sustentation Fund were not at an end. The Assembly of 1860 sent down to Presbyteries, for their consideration, certain overtures on this subject, one of which was as follows:—"That the Assembly shall, each year, after the number of sanctioned charges for the ensuing year shall have been ascertained, agree upon and appoint a definite sum to be set apart out of the ordinary income of the Sustentation Fund for that ensuing year toward the support of Church Extension charges actually sanctioned; but the sum so set apart shall never exceed what would have been 2 per cent. of the income of the past year, after deducting expenses; and that the Supplementary Sustentation Fund shall now be applied to this object, so far as the annual interest of that fund will go, and that the definite sum to be set apart by the Assembly shall be thereby diminished." In opposing this proposal Dr. Begg had to occupy a delicate position. Without doubt the design of the proposal was to expedite church extension; and equally without doubt extension was desirable;—necessary

if the people of our land were to be supplied with the means of grace. In opposing the overture Dr. Begg undoubtedly laid himself open to the suspicion of being opposed, or at least indifferent, to its design. But in reality the question was not as to the designed object, but as to the method whereby that object was proposed to be promoted. The proposal was, that the church should be extended by the application to one object of money contributed for a different object; that it should be extended by the imposition of a tax of £3 on £150 of every minister's income; that is, in the case of many ministers, on their whole income,—in these cases, an income-tax of $4\frac{4}{5}$d. per pound. It might be that the "platform" of the equal dividend was too narrow, and that greater facilities should have been given for the admission of Church Extension charges to that platform. In point of fact such facilities were given by subsequent legislation. Although opposed by some of the leading men in the Presbytery—Dr. Candlish, Sir Henry Moncreiff, Dr. Mac-Lauchlan, and Dr. Rainy—Dr. Begg's motion was carried by three to one (21–7). In his reply on this discussion, Dr. Begg introduced a Chalmerian anecdote, but either he or the reporter considerably blunted the point of it. The proper version of it is this. When the "one-and-half method" was under discussion, the question was asked what a minister would get whose congregation gave nothing. "Why, sir," said Dr. Chalmers, "he would get nothing, *plus* nothing divided by two!"

At the next meeting of Presbytery Dr. Begg supported Dr. Candlish, in opposition to Dr. Clason, Mr. William Balfour, and others who usually agreed with him, in proposing an application to the Assembly for a relaxation of the rule in regard to the curriculum of study, in order that a gentleman might be licensed and ordained to the ministry who had been very successful in evangelistic work. I happened to be Moderator of the Presbytery at the time, else I also should

have opposed him. I most cordially acquiesce in the argument used by him and others, that the curriculum can only be vindicated on the condition that it be subject to occasional relaxation. Nor did I fall behind any in appreciation of the gifts and graces of the gentleman in question. But my opposition rested on two grounds, which I stated when the matter came before the Synod:—*First*, that all encouragement should be given to lay evangelistic agency, and that it was a disparagement of that agency to remove to the ministry a successful agent. *Secondly*, as a territorial minister, I objected to the idea that the access to the ministry of territorial charges should be made wider than that to other charges. Dr. Candlish's motion was carried by a majority of one (11–10). On dissent and complaint the Synod reversed the judgment of the Presbytery. But on further dissent and complaint the Assembly reversed the judgment of the Synod, and confirmed that of the Presbytery.

At a special meeting of Presbytery on the 5th of March Dr. Begg introduced three important subjects, viz., Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister, National Education, and Sabbath Trading. The first of these subjects had not then become so hackneyed as it has now; and Dr. Begg treated it in such a way as to show that he had fully apprehended at once the Scriptural argument, and the moral, social, and ecclesiastical bearings of the proposed permission. It needs not be said that in his strenuous opposition to this proposal he never wavered or faltered. The phase of the National Education question with which he had now to do was connected with a decision of the Court of Session, to the effect that the Burgh Schools were, equally with the Parish Schools, under the control of the Presbyteries of the Established Church, and that their teachers behoved to be members of that Church. Anticipating that that decision would give rise to agitation for amendment of the law under which it was given, he advocated that advantage should be taken of

that agitation for the purpose of securing a more thorough nationalising of education. It is of some interest to note that Dr. Begg's motions on these two subjects were seconded by Dr. Candlish, and were unanimously agreed to by the Presbytery.

At the March Commission Dr. Begg reported as convener of the committee of the Cardross Case, and delivered a powerful speech. I say nothing here about the case, its history or its merits. But I extract from this speech a few sentences of a general character. The following is a good instance of the speaker's sound judgment and common sense on practical matters:—"Experience proves that the only way to settle the path of duty in regard to many questions is not to suppose the best result that can happen, but to suppose the worst result that can happen. If a man regulates his procedure by always supposing the best result that can happen, that man will very frequently find himself in the wrong at the end of the day; but if he settles his procedure upon the theory of considering what may be the worst result that may happen, he never can go wrong." In other words, expect nothing and you will not be disappointed. The following is a brief but clear enunciation of the view which Dr. Begg ever held of co-ordinate civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction:—"We hold the Scriptural ground; and I maintain that it is not only essential to the purity of the Church, but it is equally essential to the liberty of the State. What has been the grand bulwark of liberty? Why, just the two jurisdictions. What has been the grand centre of despotism? Just the absorption of the one into the other. The despotism of Russia, for example, in which the civil power absorbs the ecclesiastical, and by the union of the two establishes an unbending despotism; and the despotism of Rome, on the other hand, in which the ecclesiastical absorbs the civil—despotism in both its forms consists in the establishing and carrying out of that very principle which is contended for at present by so

many so-called Liberal journals. But the effect of carrying out their principles would be not only to destroy Christian purity, but to lay even civil liberty in the dust."

About this time Dr. Begg and the congregation of Newington were engaged in an extremely painful controversy with a neighbouring congregation and its minister. It would serve no good purpose to rake up the embers of this old fire. I shall therefore confine myself to a bare outline of the chief facts. It was a question as to the overlapping of home mission agencies. The United Presbyterian congregation of Newington had for several years been conducting operations in the Causewayside district, confining them almost entirely —though not quite—to the southern portion of the district, where their own church was situated. The Newington Free Church congregation had, ever since the Disruption—that is, some ten years before the United Presbyterian congregation came into the district—conducted operations, on a small scale, in the northern part of the district. It was at this time resolved to render these operations more efficient, and an appeal was made to the community for pecuniary help in order to the procuring of accommodation. On the issue of this appeal the United Presbyterian congregation interposed, alleging that they were carrying on efficient and sufficient operations in the district. A long correspondence ensued. The United Presbyterian congregation published as an "advertisement," extending to nearly three columns (5 ft. 10 in.!) of small type, their own statement of the case, embodying the correspondence, and commenting on the portion opposed to themselves. To this the Free Church congregation replied in a counter-advertisement, of somewhat less than a column (2 ft. 3 in.) To this the United Presbyterian congregation replied in another advertisement of two columns and a half (5 ft. 8 in.) The matter was referred to the Presbyteries of the two Churches, which decided, respectively, in favour of their own

congregations. A conference was held of committees appointed by the two Presbyteries, and an understanding was arrived at, the Free Church congregation getting what they asked, and the United Presbyterians acquiescing, only because, of course, they had no right or power to exclude the Free Church from the district although they still thought that it was uncourteous and unbrotherly on the part of the Free Church not to withdraw, or, as from their point of view, to enter into it. Although the matter was thus settled, I suspect that a good deal of unpleasant feeling remained for a long time. I may state that Dr. Begg and his congregation carried on missionary operations vigorously and with considerable success in the northern end of the Causewayside district, until, a Free Church having been formed in the Grange, the mission was handed over to that congregation, and is carried on with excellent results. It is not pleasant to contemplate the state of feeling which was indicated in the course of this controversy as existing in certain quarters. For example, when it was proposed in the United Presbyterian Presbytery to meet the Free Church Presbytery in conference, this was objected to by one member on the ground that the Presbytery's meeting with them would imply a concession of the designation which the Free Church had assumed, of the "Free Church *of Scotland*," while he held that the United Presbyterians ought not to acknowledge the existence of any "Church of Scotland," Free or other. It ought, however, to be stated that this objection, though made by a man of note, probably the most learned member of the Presbytery, appears to have found no favour with his brethren. On the other hand, it ought to be admitted that, while Dr. Begg and his office-bearers and congregation were cordially supported by the Presbytery, there were certain Free Churchmen who disapproved of their action, and in token of their sympathy with the United Presbyterian congregation, sent them large subscriptions for the support and

extension of their mission, one anonymous Free Churchman subscribing to the amount of £500. On this Dr. Begg remarked, with characteristic coolness, that it is a great evil for men to have more money than sense! The following story is one of the raciest in Dr. Begg's *repertoire*:—"A young man had preached in one of the churches in Glasgow, and he saw a curious figure in a camlet cloak, and a red handkerchief up his cheeks; the young man was told that this individual was in the habit of coming in to give some advice to young ministers after they had done. The man came in accordingly, and said, 'My young freen', ye gien us a very sweet discoorse the day; but a discoorse may be ower sweet, and I wad say to you what Boaz said to Ruth, "Dip thy morsel in the vinegar."' This is a very just remark in reference to sermons, and often in reference to men too. He liked a man to be plump and plain and to speak out his mind."

In the Assembly of this year Dr. Begg delivered a long and important speech on the much-agitated question of the union of the Australian Churches, or rather the question of the relation in which the United Church on the one hand, and on the other the Free Churchmen who had refused to enter into the union, should be held as standing towards the Free Church. The dissentients, of course, claimed that they alone should be recognised as ministers of the Free Church; the majority claimed that by entering into the union they had not forfeited their right of recognition; and a motion was made in the Assembly that some recognition should be accorded to both parties. Dr. Begg strongly opposed the recognition of the dissentients to any extent whatever. The question has long ago ceased to have any interest in the concrete. But it is of permanent importance on account of the principles which were asserted or assumed in the discussion. Dr. Begg stated with great clearness his view in regard to union, its basis, and "open questions;" a view

which, I shall have occasion to show afterwards, he held substantially when the question came nearer home. The following passage may probably be found useful for future reference:—

"On general grounds they must all admit that if unions can be formed, especially in reference to colonies of such vast extent, and where a divided Presbyterianism is almost powerless—if they can be formed upon right principles, they are eminently desirable; and this is all the length I go. I am not prepared to say that if the basis which has been adopted, for example, in Australia were not capable of the most thorough defence, we could have any ground to go upon in recognising the majority of those ministers. My ground is simply this, that I think I can thoroughly defend that basis, as it stands now, as in all the circumstances sufficient; and I just take this as an illustration. There is the same distinction, in my opinion, betwixt distance of time and distance of place. Suppose we go back to the time of our ancestors, we will admit that in the days of Melville there was a sufficient basis, and yet that basis consisted simply of those Books of Discipline and of the old Scotch Confession of Faith. It was a good basis then, simply because many questions which have been raised since had no existence then in the same forms. They did not require the same aptitude[1] of testimony. When we come to distance of place —Australia, for example—we find precisely similar circumstances, namely, a state of things in which the precise debates and extended negotiations which we have had in this country never had an existence; and it appears to me on that ground, that, within the four squares of these documents, there is an ample and a sufficiently sound basis on which to construct a Free Church in Australia."

In giving in the report of his committee on "Houses for the Working Classes," Dr. Begg was able to state that they had succeeded in getting a column introduced into the census-schedule for Scotland, to be filled up with the number

[1] Qu. "Amplitude?"—T. S.

of rooms in each house. He gave an interesting account of a visit which he had made to the Carse of Gowrie, and his inspection of the bothies there. Of course it may be said that he went with a "foregone conclusion," and that he saw only what he brought eyes to see. But his description was so graphic, and bore such a manifest air of truthfulness, as must have convinced the Assembly that war against the bothy system was a "holy war." He intimated with great satisfaction the erection of excellent farm-cottages on several estates; and repeated his often-made complaint as to the expense of conveying small portions of land.

On the subject of National Education he seconded the following motion of the late Dr. Nelson, of Greenock:—"That the General Assembly agree to petition the Legislature in favour of a scheme of National Education for Scotland, due regard being had to the religious belief of the vast majority of the people; and that this Assembly deprecate any partial legislative settlement of this question (for example, the proposed application to Parliament for increasing the salaries of the parochial schoolmasters under the present system of tests, or in reference to the recent decision in the Elgin Case) without full consideration being at the same time given to the whole educational necessities of the country." The motion was agreed to unanimously.

At the meeting of Presbytery on the 26th of June Dr. Begg made an important speech on the subject of National Education. The Lord Advocate had brought in a Bill opening the parochial schools to teachers not belonging to the Established Church. This was, of course, but a small matter, as the election was still left in the hands of the parish minister and a section of the heritors, who generally left the matter in the hands of the minister. The Presbytery, on the motion of Dr. Candlish, agreed to petition in favour of the Bill as being in the right direction, although utterly inadequate to satisfy the claims of the Free Church and the nation. Dr.

Begg, in seconding the motion, stated with great clearness the twofold difficulty in the way of really nationalising the parish schools.

Before the August Commission Dr. Begg made a speech on a matter of no great importance in itself, but involving important principles. On this account I extract a considerable part of it. The matter was this. The congregation of Strathy and Halladale had been vacant ever since the Disruption, on account of the inability of the people to agree in the choice of a minister. A commission had been sent by the Assembly to deal with parties on the spot. Of this commission Dr. W. Wilson was convener, but in his absence the report, prepared by him, was given in by Dr. Begg. After laying the report on the table, he went on to say:—

"I may state, in addition, that, as an individual member of that commission, I visited that congregation and country with very peculiar interest. It was melancholy, in the first place, to see a district of country denuded of its inhabitants;[1] some of whom I have met on the other side of the Atlantic. It was singularly melancholy, for example, to pass through a large valley, about twenty miles in length, of which the population had been nearly altogether expatriated, and in which even the parish church had been entirely removed, or rather converted into a barn, as no longer necessary. I have no doubt that, as more intelligence diffuses itself, and a better state of feeling arises, such a state of things will cease in our land. But, on the other hand, it was a matter of pleasing interest to find the staunch adherence of the people throughout the district to the Free Church. In fact, they seemed to have abandoned the Establishment to a man; so far as we could discover, the average number attending the Established Church was from three to a dozen, in a very extensive district of country. It entirely realises a story which I once heard of an Englishman, who, in the North, seeing the people flock to the church, asked, "Have you any dissenters here?" The answer was, "Yes, we have a few dissenters, who go to

[1] By the "Sutherland Clearings."—T. S.

the Established Church.[1] It was almost impossible to overrate the moral value of such a unanimous adherence; and if the same state of things had occurred over the whole of Scotland, it would have been impossible to have had a Disruption. After eighteen years had passed away, these people seemed to be as decided and unbroken in their attachment to the Free Church as ever. In the case of Strathy and Halladale it was peculiarly remarkable, inasmuch as they have been for eighteen years without a regular minister, and yet they adhered firmly, and, as we had occasion to see, most intelligently, to the Free Church. But in reference to the practical suggestions contained in the report,[2] I think it right to say that the Commissioners, all of whom were present, were strongly impressed with a sense of their importance. . . . There seems to be an impression, and I am afraid it is very general over the Church, that in choosing a minister the only thing to be decided is, who has the majority. If a majority can be secured in favour of a particular individual, the idea seems to be that that individual should, as a matter of course, be the minister of the congregation; whereas the true theory is, that a congregation is a unit. It is as much a united body as a family; and the members of the congregation, in choosing a minister, ought not to think of their own wishes merely, but of the general interest of the whole congregation, and

[1] The answer was in reality somewhat more pointed. The Englishman was Mr. John Bright, the place was Lairg. Mr. Bright asked the landlord of the inn where he was staying what church he belonged to. "Oh! to the Free Kirk. We a' belang to it." "So you have no dissenters?" "Oh ay, there's twae or three Established dissenters."—T. S.

[2] These suggestions are worthy of permanent record. They are the following:—

"1. That the Church should discourage and disallow anything like private canvassing, and obtaining names in favour of one candidate or another. Whatever is done in reference to the election of a minister should be done in the open congregational meeting, presided over by a member of Presbytery.

"2. That congregations should be made explicitly to understand that the matter of calling a minister is not a matter to be absolutely determined by a mere majority;—that what the Church desiderates, and what the law requires, is a harmonious call.

"3. It would also tend to the preservation of harmony in vacant congregations, that all private correspondence between candidates and members of the congregation were prohibited."

It would be very difficult—in some cases impossible—to enforce an absolute prohibition; but such correspondence as that referred to should be strongly reprobated.—T. S.

ought to seek so to consult with one another, and for each other, as to bring about a united, and if possible, a unanimous settlement in every case. . . . When these principles were explained and urged upon the people of Strathy and Halladale, they most cordially concurred in them, resolved to abandon their previous choices and prepossessions, to begin anew, and to endeavour to get a minister whom all the people could agree in choosing. I would say, further, that I hope the last suggestion in the report will reach the ears of our probationers and students. Their interest in being settled ought never to be regarded as a personal interest; and although a man may naturally wish to have a congregation calling him, he ought to keep in view that it is a transaction between the Church, the congregation, and himself, and not simply between himself and the congregation."

The journey of Dr. Begg to the Highlands in connection with this commission was an epochal event in his life. He often referred to it as having intensified the interest which he had felt in the Highlands and the Highlanders ever since the Inverness Assembly in 1845. This interest continued steadily to increase till the end of his life. And the interest was mutual. It might tend to correct an idea which is prevalent in some minds as to the exclusiveness and bigoted nationality of the Highlanders were those who entertain it to reflect that those who came in ecclesiastical circles to be known as "the Highland Brigade" frankly acknowledged the leadership of a Sassenach, with no drop of Celtic blood in his veins, and with no knowledge of their beloved language, as supplementary to the leadership of their own Mackays and Kennedies and Airds.

A somewhat amusing scene was enacted at Haddington on the 4th of October. Some of the East Lothian Farmers had, not unnaturally, taken offence at some imperfectly reported statements of Dr. Begg, in some of his multitudinous speeches on the relations between farmers and their servants in connection with the bothy system. The East Lothian Agricultural Club invited him to attend one of their meetings,

and to discuss with them the whole question of the condition of rural labourers. I suspect that the invitation was given somewhat in the spirit of a challenge, and with the expectation that it would not be accepted. But Dr. Begg was not the man to decline either a friendly invitation, as this was in language and form, or a challenge, as it probably was, in some part, in spirit. He accordingly accepted the invitation, and dined with the Club on the date mentioned. After dinner a long and interesting discussion took place, the report of which covers half a page in the *Witness*. The result was most satisfactory. Some misapprehensions on both parts were cleared away. A perfect agreement was ascertained between the Club and their guest as to the desirability of improving the condition of the agricultural labourer to the greatest extent possible, and not very material disagreement as to the amount of the possibility, or the method of effecting the improvement. I may say, in passing, that the state of matters in East Lothian was never very bad, and that now it is as good as probably it can be made. Dr. Begg's visit to the county on this occasion had certainly a good deal to do with the supply of such deficiency of accommodation as then existed.

I notice that at the meeting of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale on the 29th of October, Dr. Begg apologised for not having attended, "owing to ill health," to a matter which had been entrusted to him. I do not think, however, that his indisposition amounted to aught more than the "fagging" which now came upon him occasionally, and sent him to his favourite resort of Bridge of Allan.

The anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot was signalised this year by the installation of Dr. Wylie as lecturer in connection with the Protestant Institute of Scotland. This was a great event in Dr. Begg's history. The Institute owed its existence to him more than to any other man; more, indeed, than to all other men together. And the lecturer was his personal

friend, as well as the object of his respect and admiration on account of the service which he had already rendered to the great cause of Protestantism. The constitution of the Institute is catholic, seven of its thirteen Directors being appointed by the Free Presbytery of Edinburgh, and six by the Scottish Reformation Society, which is quite undenominational. At the installation of Dr. Wylie, a sermon was preached by Dr. Candlish, and a public meeting was held, which was presided over by Dr. Begg, and which was addressed by four ministers of denominations other than the Free Church. Dr. Begg, as chairman, gave an interesting address on his favourite topics, the unchangeableness of Romanism, and its progress in Scotland. Dr. Wylie has done, and is doing, excellent service to the cause of truth, by the delivery of a course of lectures each winter in Edinburgh and Glasgow. These lectures are attended by large classes of students, mainly, though not exclusively, theological.

In connection with the November Commission an important Conference on Foreign Missions was held in Edinburgh, under the presidency of Dr. Tweedie, the convener of the Foreign Missions Committee. This was one of the most important Conferences ever held on the subject. The occasion of it was the existence of ill-defined suspicions as to the propriety or wisdom of the educational system introduced by Dr. Duff, and largely adopted in all the Indian Presidencies. Those who entertained these suspicions expressed them honestly; and the result of the whole was a cordial acquiescence in the educational method, as one, and a very important one, of the methods which ought to be employed for bringing the gospel to bear on the understandings, the hearts, and the consciences of men. In this Conference Dr. Begg took an active part, and was in his best "form." The introductory paragraph of his speech well merits reproduction here:—

"Dr. BEGG said—I am sure we have all listened with the deepest interest to the admirable address which has just been delivered.[1] I, for one, may say that the whole proceedings of this Conference have been extremely interesting to me, and I rejoice to think that a question which seemed at first to assume the aspect of a debate may be said to have ceased to assume that aspect. There seems to be now, I think, whatever there may have been before the Conference assembled, great unanimity both in regard to the maintenance of our existing institutions in India, and in regard to the importance of extending the cause of Christ by evangelistic operations, if men can be found qualified for the work. It is impossible not to recognise the wonderful sagacity of Dr. Duff in discovering the plan which he has worked with such zeal for many years past; and I do not see any ground on which a doubt can exist in regard to the importance of his efforts, and those of his coadjutors, to teach men, and especially men in these circumstances, by the deliberate application of effective means—by means beyond all doubt defensible on the highest Christian grounds. I rejoice to think it is universally conceded[2] now that the preaching of the gospel, as we ordinarily understand that phrase, ought also to be used as extensively as possible in the evangelisation of India; and I should like that there were no apparent antagonism between these operations, or any attempt to exaggerate the importance of the one at the expense of the other. The only thing that grated at all on my feelings was the idea that India is so peculiar in the composition of its people, or in its circumstances, that the simple preaching of the gospel cannot be supposed to be effectual, by the Divine Spirit, in converting the highest and most educated people."

He then goes on to lament the lack of men able and willing to do the work of the Church in the Colonies and the mission-field, and very solemnly appeals to ministers and Christian men to strive to imbue with a missionary spirit the earnest young men in our congregations, and to facilitate

[1] By Principal Cunningham.—T. S.

[2] I take the liberty to say that this was never a "concession" on the part of the advocates of the higher Christian education as an important missonary method. It is what we never conceded, but always *maintained*.—T. S.

their obtaining the necessary education. As illustrative of the eagerness of young men to get churches at home, and their unwillingness to go abroad, he introduced one of his favourite stories. There was an old minister in the South of Scotland who fell into bad health and consequent low spirits. Two of his co-presbyters went to see him. He spoke despondingly of the state of his health, and complained grievously of the difficulty he found in getting probationers to occupy his pulpit. "Do ye think," said one of his brethren, "ye're gaun to dee?" On his piously stating that that was a very probable issue of his illness, his friend said, "Then ye had better let that be kenned." He took the advice, and had thenceforth no difficulty in procuring supply!

During the night of Saturday, or Sabbath morning the 23d of November, a calamity occurred in Edinburgh which appalled every heart. An old tenement in the High Street, occupied by thirty or forty families, fell with a sudden crash, burying its sleeping occupants in the ruin. Twenty-nine of them were killed, and a large number severely injured. On examination it was found that the catastrophe was caused simply by the action of centuries on the timber and mortar of the walls and foundation. This suggested to Dr. Begg the thought which was seldom absent from his mind, and to which all associations seemed to lead, the importance of providing better dwellings for the poorer classes in our cities. Accordingly, in a public meeting held to procure relief for the homeless and injured, he said:—"He entirely agreed with the resolutions proposed, and he hoped and expected that there would be no difficulty in raising a large sum to meet the case of those who had suffered by this tremendous calamity. He also anticipated that an examination would take place into the particular circumstances that had led to the calamity. But he trusted they would not allow the public sympathy to pass away without endeavouring to accomplish far more important objects than even these. He

thought they would ill read the lesson of Providence in this tremendous visitation unless something were done for the purpose of improving what was undoubtedly the general cause of all such calamities—the wretched accommodation provided for the working classes in this city. He would not obtrude any observations on that subject, because it was a very large one, and would require very full consideration; but if no one else was prepared to call attention to the subject, it was his purpose to give a lecture to-morrow evening in John Knox's Church [1] on this subject, for the purpose of endeavouring to arouse public attention, and to point out what he thought was the duty of the people of this city in the circumstances in which they were placed. A meeting was also to take place on Friday for an object of the greatest importance—to encourage the working people of this city to proceed to erect houses for themselves—the only way in which the evil could be permanently met. These he believed to be the great practical lessons of this event; but at the same time he cordially concurred in all the measures which had been adopted."

Concluding a singularly eloquent leader on the calamity, the *Witness* says:—"We are glad to see that our townsman, Dr. Begg, prompt as usual in his philanthropy, is coming forward in this emergency. We want to hear what plan the Doctor will recommend. This at least we may be sure of, it will be no Utopian one. If all will give their heads to the work of devising, and their shoulders to the work of executing, it is possible that we may yet see great good come out of this most deplorable catastrophe."

The lecture was delivered, and the public meeting was held, as announced. The lecturer dwelt upon his favourite topics, the bearing of good houses on the comfort and morals of their occupants, the need of improvement, and the ways by which it might be effected. Those he referred to were

[1] In the immediate neighbourhood of the scene.—T. S.

the benevolence of the philanthropic; this, mingled with a fairly remunerative investment; and the co-operation of working men themselves in Building Societies. While all three should be called into operation, his main dependence was on the last. He also referred to the importance of legislative enactments for the purpose of enabling land to be got for this purpose on such terms as those on which it can be had for the construction of railroads and other public works; and to the necessity of lessening the legal charges for the transfer of land. He concluded as follows:—

"I must have done; and I fear I have already trespassed too far, although it is impossible to over-estimate the importance of the subject, especially at the present moment, to all classes of the community. Some have imagined that this was very much a monomania on my part. I have not been moved by that opinion; and I suppose that every man who desires to do any good must be content to be misunderstood. But I stand here this evening, within a few paces of that sad and dismal ruin, which was so lately a living (?) tomb, and I feel justified now in the clearest way for any little that I have done in the past to procure better houses for the people. My only regret is, that, being so much absorbed by professional and other engagements, I have been able to give so little time to a matter so profoundly important. Giving the utmost credit to all the pioneers in every walk of benevolence, I hold that the question before us this evening stands first amid questions of mere social reform. The state of the houses of the people must ever be the moral and social barometer of the nation; and I here, before this great audience, testify, in the presence of Him who shall soon judge us all, that if all warnings are still neglected, and greater mischiefs must still overwhelm our unhappy and neglected people, I and others who have laboured in the same cause will still have the satisfaction of saying, 'These hands are clean.'"

It would be unpardonable to omit from the biography of a Free Church minister a notice of the death of Principal Cunningham on the 14th of December 1861. His removal was felt by every Free Churchman to be the greatest calamity

that had befallen the Church since the morning when the earthly career of Dr. Chalmers came to an unexpected end. In some respects the loss of Dr. Cunningham was more regretted, if possible, than that of Dr. Chalmers. For one thing, he was a younger man, and his great powers were in unimpaired vigour; while those of Dr. Chalmers, though not actually impaired, could not, in the course of nature, be expected to retain their mighty vigour much longer. And then the qualities of Dr. Cunningham were precisely of the kind with which the Free Church could least afford to dispense. His learning, at once extensive and accurate, the unexampled union of tremendous debating power with almost excessive candour, and with the childlike simplicity which compelled all who knew him to love him, led all when they heard of his death to quote the verse, "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?"

In Dr. Begg's case the most intimate personal friendship was added to the admiration which he shared with all his brethren. From the time of their first meeting in 1828 (see vol. i. p. 72), all through the years when they were co-presbyters in Paisley, and then when they were co-presbyters in Edinburgh, their personal friendship and mutual esteem were unbroken, while their sentiments on public questions—with the single exception of the Aberdeen College question—were practically the same. Many a time in the days of conflict in after years did Dr. Begg lament the absence of one whose potent aid he confidently believed that he would have enjoyed. Many a time his aspiration was—

> "O for the touch of a vanished hand
> And the sound of a voice that is still;"

even as, in still later days, with reference to the *two* champions, the aspiration of their followers was—

> "O for an hour of Wallace wight,
> Or well-skilled Bruce to rule the fight."

CHAPTER XLIV.

PASTORAL LETTER—SUPPLY OF MINISTERS—EDUCATION BILL—SABBATH OBSERVANCE—FREE NORMAL SCHOOL—DR. CANDLISH—READING SERMONS—FAREWELL LETTER—CARDROSS CASE.

AMONGST the too few records of Dr. Begg's dealings with the members and families of his congregation, there is before me the following letter addressed by him to Mr. Moir Porteous, then one of his elders, and an earnest fellow-labourer with him in connection with the Reformation Society,—now Dr. Moir Porteous, minister of Cowgatehead Church, Edinburgh:—

"MANSE, GRANGE, *January* 15, 1862.

"MY DEAR MR. PORTEOUS,—It grieves me exceedingly to hear of your sad and heavy trial, and I trust and pray that Jesus, who is a "brother born for adversity," may be very near to comfort and sustain you. These dispensations are very dark and trying, but there is a "need be" for every trial which the Lord permits, and "what we know not now we shall know hereafter." I do trust that Mrs. Porteous may be sustained by the richest consolations of God's Word and Spirit amidst a trial which may be expected especially to wound a mother's heart. "The Lord reigneth," and it is a blessed experience to be enabled to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Our dear ones are taken away from the evil to come, and a sharp lesson is taught to those that are left behind. The Lord is giving us at present many lessons. May none of them pass away unimproved, and may we seek more and more to have our conversation in heaven, and our hearts also there. I shall, God willing, be with you on Friday; and meantime, with earnest sympathy, I am, ever yours truly,

"JAMES BEGG.

"Mr. J. M. Porteous."

Apparently suggested by the proceedings in the Missionary Conference, referred to in last chapter (p. 306), was the following overture, which Dr. Begg moved in the Edinburgh Presbytery on the 29th of January 1862:—

"It is humbly overtured by the Free Presbytery of Edinburgh that the General Assembly shall seriously consider the following points in reference to a future supply of ministers and missionaries, viz.:—

"1. Whether some more special examinations ought not to be made before young men enter the Divinity Hall, but especially before they receive license, in regard to their personal professions of religion, and to the evidences which they may have given, in the places where they have resided, of zeal in the cause of Christ.

"2. Whether special efforts ought not to be made to search out young men of decided zeal, energy, and sense, and to encourage them to devote themselves to the service of God in the ministry of the gospel.

"3. Whether the Church should not foster the erection of working men's colleges in provincial towns, and, without interfering with existing arrangements, the establishment of evening and morning classes in all our Universities, so that the circumstances of young men may be met who cannot study at the usual hours.

"4. Whether a thorough knowledge of the English Bible, so as to be able to quote it accurately and fluently, ought not to form a more prominent qualifications in the training of our future ministers."

In advocating the transmission of this important overture, Dr. Begg exhibited much of his native good sense and honesty. By the form of the first recommendation, he met the obvious objection of the difficulty of ascertaining the personal piety of any one. It was not so much a certificate of the conviction of the certifiers that the student was a man of piety that was required, as evidence that he had manifested zeal in the cause of Christ. This is a matter easily ascertainable. In insisting on it he did not undervalue talents or scholarship, but maintained that these could not be a substi-

tute for this, nor this for these. Equally to be deprecated is the representation of the all-sufficiency of piety and zeal in the absence of other qualifications, and the non-ascertainment of the existence of piety and zeal, when there may be a fair measure of talent and scholarship. That zeal and piety were too little accounted of in other days can hardly be questioned. The danger which has now to be guarded against lies, perhaps, in the opposite direction. That these are indispensable cannot be maintained too strenuously; perhaps the tendency of the present day is, consciously or unconsciously, to regard them as sufficient. With reference to the importance of increasing the facilities for preliminary studies by the institution of provincial colleges, and of morning and evening classes in the Universities, he said:—"At the present moment it is necessary for a man to study eight years—four years in the preliminary classes, and four years in the Theological Hall. This is a large demand upon the time of a man; and it is pretty evident that if a young man is past fourteen or fifteen years of age, it becomes almost a prohibition. In consequence of that demand, and the impossibility of devoting that time, I believe we lose many excellent ministers. Thus a man who becomes serious after he has reached eighteen or twenty would devote himself to the work if it was possible to overcome the initial difficulties. I know one or two cases which just prove the extreme earnestness that exists among certain men who want to enter the ranks of the ministry. One of them found that the only occupation which he could undertake, which would allow him to study during the day at the hours at which in our colleges the classes meet, was that of a night-watchman, and he actually became a night-watchman for the purpose of having it in his power to study during the day, and get on to the work of the ministry."

I have not language strong enough to express my respect for, and admiration of, such a man as this; and I believe

that, in consequence of our long curriculum, we do "lose many excellent ministers." But it is no insignificant offset to this loss that we gain many excellent laymen. In a healthy state of a Presbyterian Church, in which it should be practically acknowledged that ministers, elders, deacons, and members have all co-ordinate and equally important duties to perform, the wisdom would be more manifest than it is apt to be of the apostolic admonition—"Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." We want pious and zealous ministers much, but not more than we want pious and zealous laymen. This was the only matter in which there was even a shade of difference of opinion in the Presbytery. This difference was well stated by Dr. Blaikie:—"In regard to the third part of the overture, he could not help saying that there was more delicacy and difficulty in the matter than some members seemed to think. He might be wrong, but his impression was, that such a proposal as had been made would not find favour with the University Commissioners, and that it would rather be held to be in opposition to what they had been endeavouring to do in the way of elevating University culture and education."

The whole matter was referred to a committee, with Dr. Begg as convener. He brought up a report at the meeting in March, when the first, second, and fourth particulars were unanimously agreed to, but the third—that relating to morning and evening classes in the Universities—was rejected by a majority of 6 (11-5). The list of the vote shows that the majority was made up of two classes—men well entitled to be jealous for the maintenance of the highest culture attainable, such as Dr. Blaikie and the late Dr. Hanna; and others who were simply averse to change.

About this time a question came into more prominence in public attention than had hitherto been accorded to it. It was the wretched proposal to legalise a man's marriage with the sister of his dead wife. As might have been anticipated,

Dr. Begg took up and ever maintained a decided position on this question. He was either the originator, or one of the earliest adopters, of the now trite dictum as to the two primitive ordinances—marriage and the Sabbath. He ever held that they are enemies of God and of man who seek to break down the sacred barriers of one or the other of these sacred institutions. He never hesitated to designate as incestuous such marriages as those sought to be legalised; and while he left it to others to discuss the question as one of Old Testament exegesis, he yielded to none in energetically maintaining that "the law is holy, and just, and good." A public meeting was held in Edinburgh on this question at the beginning of March 1862. In the newspaper list of those present we find a large representation of ministers and laymen of the Established, Free, and Episcopal Churches, and a few ministers of the United Presbyterian Church. Dr. Begg gave a short but effective speech on the subject.

At the meeting of the Commission in March, besides giving in the report already referred to, Dr. Begg moved that the Commission should petition Parliament in favour of the introduction of a national system of education. "He had recently discovered a fact which proved strongly the absolute necessity of some better provision for common education in Scotland. Out of the signatures to marriages, one-third of the parties seemed to be unable to sign their own names. It had been suggested to him that the nervousness of the position in which the parties were placed who were passing through such an ordeal was the cause of this; but, from his own experience, he had almost never met with any such nervousness as prevented the parties from subscribing their names."[1]

At the meeting of Presbytery on the 26th March, Dr. Begg proposed an overture that the Assembly should commemorate the ejection of the 2000 ministers in 1662.

[1] My experience has been different. I have frequently had brides whom I

In the month of April a most important public meeting was held in Edinburgh for the consideration of an Education Bill brought into the House of Commons by the Lord Advocate (Moncreiff). With all his desire for a national system of education, Dr. Begg strongly opposed the Lord Advocate's bill, on the ground that it was not truly national, and that on two accounts:—*First*, because it proposed to leave the appointment of teachers to parish schools in the hand of the heritors; and, *secondly*, because it proposed to give denominational grants to Romanists and Episcopalians. While thoroughly sympathising with these objections, I must be allowed to say that I think Dr. Begg did not give the Lord Advocate the credit to which he was fairly entitled. His lordship never represented his bill as ideally perfect, but only—a very different thing—as the best that there was any reasonable hope of carrying. He was, of course, powerless unless he had the cordial support of the Government, and that Government was composed almost entirely of men who had no special knowledge of, or interest in, Scottish education. Then, to curtail the power of the heritors was to provoke the opposition of the prevailing class in both Houses of Parliament. Altogether I do not think that Lord Moncreiff's services in the cause of national education have ever been fairly appreciated. It was not in his power actually to carry a measure. But it was his zeal, energy, and patience that, more than aught else, contributed to the formation of that public sentiment which made it possible for his successor to carry the measure under which the education of the country is now carried on. "One man

knew to be able to write rendered incapable by nervousness. Nor can I account for the largeness of the number given as unable to write. Having been for twenty years minister of a territorial church in Edinburgh, my matrimonial practice was mainly among the poorest of the people; yet my proportion of "illiterates" fell immensely short of one-third of the whole. I presume that the astounding proportion was made up in large part of Irish Romanists.—T. S.

soweth, and another reapeth." It ought to be stated, however, that Dr. Begg refused to agree to a motion which was proposed in the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale for requesting the Lord Advocate to withdraw the Bill. He wished it to be amended, and argued that, if not amended, it must be opposed; but he accepted what was good in it.

At the meeting of Presbytery on the following day he proposed an overture, "that the General Assembly shall consider the propriety of arranging, by fixing a text-book or otherwise, that all our theological students shall be made thoroughly acquainted with the history of our own Church." Small as this matter appears, it is important as indicating that at so early a period the conviction had entered into Dr. Begg's mind—a conviction which subsequently became very potent—that there was a danger of a departure, on the part of the Free Church, from the principles of the Disruption. The Presbytery received with "laughter" his statement that "he was sorry that, as convener of the committee,[1] he was forced to discover that some of the Free Church ministers themselves were remarkably ill informed upon the subject of the history of their own Church." What he contemplated evidently was, that Dr. Robert Buchanan should be requested to prepare an abridgment of his "Ten Years' Conflict" for the use of students.

A special meeting of Commission was held on the 1st of May to consider the Lord Advocate's Education Bill. In the discussion which ensued, the divergence came distinctly out as to the part which the Church should take in the secular education of the people. Dr. Begg's special friend and mine, Dr. Nixon of Montrose, stated, with his usual force and clearness, the responsibility of the State, the parents, and the Church. "I think," he said, "that the Church of Christ has just as solemn a right and as vital an interest in the educa-

[1] On the Cardross Case.—T. S.

tion question as either of these parties—a right of which she cannot safely divest herself; and I think it will require very strong considerations indeed to make her agree to any movement to divest ourselves of our responsibility in this matter. I say that, if the Church of Christ divests itself of the influence it exercises over the education of the young, it appears like destroying the left arm of its strength." In answer to this, Dr. Begg said—"It is well known that I do not concur in the views which have been expressed by Mr. Nixon in regard to the necessary relation betwixt our Churches and our schools; and I am not sure that you can carry out the general view that all education is to be conducted directly in connection with the Church, and as part of the Church's machinery, without facing the alternative of providing the whole funds for the education of the country, just as the Church contributed the whole funds for the dissemination of the gospel." I have no hesitation in saying that subsequently Dr. Begg went nearer to Dr. Nixon's views, or substantially adopted them. Yet I do not think he was chargeable with inconsistency. The truth is, that hitherto the proper tendency of certain views respecting the relations of the secular and the spiritual, the State and the Church, had not been fully developed into practical proposals. Voluntaryism had theoretically sprung into being in full maturity; but practically it had acquiesced in many inconsistencies. Dr. Begg and many others accepted these inconsistencies as modifications of the system itself. It was only after the proper tendency of the system became manifest to separate the Church as such altogether from the nation as such, that he took a decided stand with respect to the mutual responsibilities of the State and the Church, whether established or non-established. It is noticeable in this connection that when almost all the Free Church schools were discontinued or given over to the School Boards under Lord Advocate Young's Education Act, the Newington

school remained, and remains till this day, a Free Church school.

At a meeting of the Presbytery of Edinburgh on the 14th of May, Dr. Begg introduced the subject of Sabbath shop-opening. The Presbytery, on his motion, agreed unanimously to petition Parliament for the introduction into a Police Act of clauses which should make the penalties real, by substituting sterling for Scotch money, and should require, or at least authorise, the police to prosecute for breach of the law. In the Assembly, which met a week later, Dr. Begg moved the adoption of the Report of the Committee on Sabbath Observance, and dwelt upon various forms of Sabbath desecration. In presenting the Report of the Committee on Popery, he concluded as follows an eloquent speech on the aggression of Rome and the apathy of Protestants:—

"We have all heard of the inundations in England, and the disastrous results that have followed them. The salt sea had, by the efforts of our forefathers, been driven back from the fens, and the ground that was previously cursed with barrenness became, by their labours, a smiling and fertile level to the descendants of those who had accomplished the mighty result. The people inhabitating these plains, instead of being jealous of the first influx of the tide upon the reclaimed land, allowed it to gather until the sea, raging around the barricade erected to keep it out, broke through and submerged that fertile land. This should be a lesson to us. Our forefathers have possessed a land which was sown with salt and smitten with spiritual darkness, which land has become as a smiling garden; but now there are openings being made in these embankments by which these great privileges have been secured to us; and we are looking stolidly on whilst these are widening, and whilst all the blessings which were so dearly purchased are threatened to be swept away. It seems to me to be one of the most ominous signs of the times that we have a double stream running in our land—a stream of good, blessed be God—a stream of hopeful revival, bringing men from the fearful pit and the

miry clay. But we have a counter stream. Satan knows that he has but a short season, and Satan's great masterpiece is being instinct with new life; and while we look at one aspect of the question—and this is right if we do not look at it exclusively—I fear we are blind to the other. Let us humbly hope that this Church may partake in the revived spirit, and may look with alarm at the very prospect—at the very possibility—of Rome's achieving a foul triumph in Britain. We read of the groans of her victims in Spain; we read of her triumphs in some of the British colonies; we see her murderous spirit stalking abroad in Ireland; and shall we be blind to the great lesson which God is teaching us in His providence? Shall we not in our several places, and from our pulpits, seek both to enlighten the people, and to complete and perfect that machinery to which I have alluded? It would be a noble thing for our Church, which God has so distinguished by privileges and gifts, whatever other Churches may do, though they may let down the testimony of Knox, and though they may wrap themselves up in indifference while the enemy is coming in like a flood, to engage in that great death-struggle which I believe is imminent, and which will swallow up all other controversies. It were a noble thing if our Church were to stand in the very van of resistance against the great adversary of the truth."

The most important act of this Assembly was the appointment of Dr. Candlish and Dr. Rainy to succeed Dr. Cunningham in his principalship and professorship respectively. Dr. Begg took no part in the discussion. Besides the part which I have already stated that he took in the proceedings of the Assembly, he raised his potent voice in defence of the "equal dividend." In the course of his speech on this subject he made some happy "hits." Speaking of the management of a certain fund, he said, "I know this, that if you are to judge of any administration by the satisfaction produced among *those who are the recipients of the funds*, &c." Speaking of that distinction that we often hear made between ministers and "business men," he said, "I do not at all sympathise

with the very strong views to which Mr. —— has given utterance in reference to the part the ministers take in the administration of the financial affairs. I have always held a sort of middle view on this subject. I don't believe that because a man is a layman he necessarily understands money matters. Many laymen mismanage their money matters, and we have had some very frequent proofs of that in recent times. Many ministers know little about money matters; but, man for man, we understand the management of our own money matters, as ministers, as well as our excellent friends the elders do. I am delighted to see the elders amongst us, and I am also delighted to see the lawyers." The minister would be a very foolish man who should suppose that he knew more of legal matters than a lawyer, or more of engineering than an engineer, or more of navigation than a sailor. But I venture to say that if you put an average lawyer, and an average engineer, and an average sailor, and an average minister to the consideration of a matter outside of their several specialities, the last will not take a less intelligent view of it than the others. It is a noble characteristic of the Presbyterian system, in which it excels all others, excepting in so far as any of them, as *e.g.* the Wesleyan, are in this respect practically identical with it, that it is able to utilise the various talents of its members. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." Dr. Begg came out, as usual, in his greatest force when speaking to the report of his Committee on Houses for the Working-Classes. From a noble speech I extract a single short passage:—

"John Knox asserted the noble principle that they were ministers unto the people for God, and that they were not lords over God's heritage, but members of the community, and only bound to be more forward than others in doing good. That had always been a characteristic principle of

the Presbyterian Church, and it should be the practice of her ministers. They were bound to make common cause with those around them, being all things to all men in the best sense of the word. There was a loud call for greater exertions in this way, for others were endeavouring to lead the working-classes away from God by telling them that religion was worthless, because it did not grapple with those evils to which they were so sensitive. These deluders talked to them of the loveliness of the religion of flowers, and how beautiful is the ornamenting of cottages,—far better than barren sermons in the House of God. Though cleanliness was behind godliness, the two had a close affinity; and though the religion of flowers would never elevate man from the fearful pit and from the miry clay, yet an elevated man would delight himself in everything honest, lovely, and of good report, and prove to those around him that godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life which now is, as well as that which is to come."

Both in this Assembly, and a month later at the opening of the new premises of the Free Normal School (Moray House), Dr. Begg confessed he was disappointed in his expectation that we should soon have a national system of education, and strenuously maintained the duty of the Free Church to support energetically her own Education Scheme. At the close of his speech on the latter occasion he paid the following graceful compliment to Dr. Candlish: "He congratulated Dr. Candlish on all he had done for the promotion of education in Scotland, and on this day's proceedings. Along with all the great names Dr. Candlish had mentioned as promoting education, he was quite sure Dr. Candlish's own name would go down to the latest posterity as one of the greatest. He had not rightly got his tongue about *Principal Candlish* yet, but he did rejoice in his appointment to promote the interests of the Free Church's greatest educational institution. But he hoped that would not prevent his continuing his interest in this institution, and that they would have established in his person for many years to come

a connection between all the kinds of education in which the Free Church is engaged."

A small matter, which yet kindled no small fire, originated at this time. A bill was introduced into the House of Lords, by a most respectable nobleman, Lord Belhaven, to give the Courts of the Established Church power to compel the attendance of witnesses, whether members of their own communion or not. On various occasions Dr. Begg spoke strongly in opposition to such a measure. The bill was ultimately withdrawn.

At the meeting of the Presbytery on the 30th of July, and again at the meeting of the Commission in August, Dr. Begg called attention to the disclosures respecting the House Accommodation of the people made by the census of the preceding year. It was mainly through his means that a column was introduced into the census schedule requiring a statement of the number of apartments in each house. The state of matters thus disclosed was horrible. In Edinburgh there were 121 families living in single rooms without windows, and 13,209 families—say 50,000 persons—living in houses of one apartment with a window. "Of these, 825 had six persons in a room, 437 had seven, 173 had eight, 55 had nine, 26 had ten, 8 had eleven, 3 had twelve, 1 had thirteen, 1 had fourteen, and 1 had fifteen!" Surely this was amply sufficient to justify the agitation which Dr. Begg had so persistently kept up on the subject. That things are considerably better now we owe mainly to this agitation; and I am sure that no philanthropist in our day of philanthropy has better earned the blessing of those who were ready to perish. It is for us who are left behind him to lay to heart that the work which he began is still far from complete accomplishment; and moreover, that it must be a continuous work. The improvement of our cities necessitates the destruction of many streets and blocks of houses. If others are not erected in succession to these, the

increase of population will ere long lead to even greater crowding, if that be possible, than that which subsisted twenty years ago.

It is not often that we are able to get a sight of Dr. Begg outside of church courts and public meetings. It is, therefore, particularly gratifying when we are able to catch an occasional glimpse of him with his armour off. In August 1862 he was able so far to unite business with needed rest and relaxation, as to pay a visit to the Highlands. He afterwards published an account of it in the *Bulwark*. I had marked it for transference to these pages. The reader, I am sure, would have been glad to have it as a specimen of the descriptive powers of the author. Although Dr. Begg had a good eye to see what was set before him, and a facile tongue and pen to describe what he saw, it must be acknowledged that of mere scenery, as such, he did not make much account. The earth he regarded as a dwelling-place for man, and in his estimate of the beauty of its several regions, utility was a large element. The perfection of beauty in his eye was a well-cultivated farm, where ripe grain alternated with "green crops," according to a wise rotation, and all cultivated by a stalwart peasantry, and studded with comfortable farm-houses and cottages—and no bothies. Yet he was not indifferent to the stern grandeur of the Highland hills, or the beauty of Highland lakes, while he had an intense admiration of, and affection for, the Highland character.

At the meeting of Presbytery in September, Dr. Begg made an important speech on Sabbath observance, in connection with an attempt that was being made to get the Royal Botanic Gardens opened on the Lord's Day. The attempt was happily frustrated then, and also on several subsequent occasions when it was renewed. It is often said that public opinion is more and more running in this direction. If it be so—and I fear that it is—I can only say: The worse for public opinion, and the worse for the public.

He made a similar speech in a great public meeting on the subject—one of the most crowded and most influential that had been held for a long time. He also spoke on the same subject in the meeting of Presbytery on the 29th of October.

At the meeting of the Commission in November a proposal was made by Dr. Robert Buchanan, seconded by Dr. Begg, to recommend that a collection should be made for the alleviation of the great distress in Lancashire, occasioned by what was called the "Cotton Famine," one of the effects of the civil war in America. In advocating this Dr. Begg stated strongly his views as to divine retribution for national sins. The occasion of the war was slavery. Slavery had been maintained in the interests of Lancashire; and now retribution was coming at once on America and on Lancashire.

At the meeting of the Association for the Religious Improvement of the Highlands, Dr. Begg moved the adoption of the report, and again referred to the delight which his Highland tour had afforded him. The following statement he repeated again and again, and with ever-increasing emphasis, to the end of his life:—"He had always taken a deep interest in the Highlanders. He had occasion to see them in very trying circumstances, worshipping below the tide-mark; and he had occasion to see them in another land, maintaining that noble character for religious consistency for which most of them had been distinguished. He had always reckoned the inhabitants of the south to be their debtors, for the firmness with which they had maintained the great principles of Divine truth."

On the last day of 1862 Dr. Begg introduced an overture into the Presbytery, "That the General Assembly shall adopt some effectual plan in connection with all our colleges, whereby all our theological students shall be trained in the art of delivering their sermons without reading." This

was, of course, a subject which gave much room for his peculiar style of argument; and his speech in support of his overture is a very characteristic one. I can only extract a few sentences—bricks as a specimen of the building. "I once heard a statement made by an individual in connection with the remembering of a sermon, which story was to the following effect:—The person was asked whether he remembered what the minister had been preaching about, when he replied, 'It is not to be thought that I could mind the sermon, when the minister could not mind it himself.' Now I think there is philosophy as well as wit in this answer." "No doubt there are plausible objections to the whole of this. Some people may say, for example, that preaching without reading implies a worse style of addressing a congregation, and to that they object. I sometimes hear people saying, 'We wish our minister would read; for if he read, we would be sure that he had something to say.' Well, I of course am no advocate for loose talk in the pulpit. I think if there is any place where a man ought to brace himself up to speaking with his full strength, it is when he speaks in the name of Jesus to perishing and immortal souls. But I must say that I believe there is an extemporaneousness of writing as well as an extemporaneousness of speaking." "Then, again, I hear it constantly said by men who advocate reading, 'Our great men read,' and, therefore, it follows, I suppose, that 'Our little men should read.' . . . For a young man to go down and afflict the country people by reading a dry, dull sermon, and to turn round and say, 'I do so because Dr. Chalmers read his sermons,' seems to me to be about as gross a misrepresentation and perversion of argument as a man could use." "When I was lately in the North of Scotland, I heard of an incident that occurred not long ago, in connection with a vacancy near Aberdeen. A number of young men came to the church to preach as candidates, and almost all of them read their sermons. A

friend of mine had a talk with one of the shrewd hearers after the first youth had officiated. 'How did you like the preacher?' said he. ''Deed, sir,' was the reply, 'no very weel; he will never be able to say, like the Apostle Paul, he has forgotten the parchments.'"

From the newspaper report I see that I took a somewhat prominent part in opposition to Dr. Begg. I made some statements then which I would not make now without considerable modification. But I held then, and hold now, that in a matter of this kind every man should do his own best. I should be disposed to say now that if any man finds that he has no special difficulty respecting either of the methods, he should prefer that advocated by Dr. Begg.

Just before this one of Dr. Begg's sons left his father's house to go to New Zealand. After parting with him on the 24th of December, his father wrote him the following letter on Christmas Day:—

EDINBURGH, *Dec. 25th*, 1862.

MY DEAREST FERDIE,—It was with a sore heart that I and your dear mother parted with you yesterday at Glasgow. But I do trust that by the blessing of a gracious God all may turn out well. Do take care of yourself, and live near to God. Don't forget your Bible or your prayers. We are a little anxious about the wine which your dear mother thinks is part of the supplies. Don't have anything to do with it except you are unwell. A taste for drink is soon acquired, and is the ruin of thousands. Be sure also to avoid gambling, even for a farthing,—another ruin to young men. I send a letter to the Rev. Mr. Stewart in case you need it, and also one to Dr. Burns. Mr. Crawford is also to give you one to Mr. Adam, his agent. I am writing to Alic by the overland mail this day, so that I hope he will know of your arrival and be prepared to receive you. I hope you will get into some good situation where you are likely to get on, but if after making a full trial you fail—if you behave well—I shall be as glad to pay for your passage home, and to do everything in my power to help you, as I have been to send you out. Indeed, as long as I live you

can count upon my help if you do well. Now, dearest Ferdie, let us hear good accounts of you. I send a parcel of things that were left by mistake, and I hope you have everything necessary for your comfort. Give our kindest love to Alic, and say what pleasure it would give us all to see you both back in this country.

May the Lord be with you to guard you from all danger, to make your way plain before you, and to keep you to His everlasting kingdom, is the earnest prayer of your loving father, JAMES BEGG.

Reference has been frequently made to the "Cardross Case." It had so important bearings on the relations of the Free Church—and indeed of all Churches—to the civil powers, that it ought to be noticed in the Life of every Free Church minister who lived at the time of its occurrence. But Dr. Begg, as well may be supposed, had much to do with it, directly and indirectly, as a prominent man in the councils of the Church, and as, for some time, convener of the Assembly's Committee with regard to it. I have therefore thought it right to give a short account of it in a continuous form.

There came up to the Assembly of 1858 a case against Mr. MacMillan of Cardross. Mr. MacMillan had been charged by the Presbytery of Dunbarton with two instances of drunkenness, and one which, in a criminal charge, would have been described as "assault with intent." The Presbytery found the first charge not proven, the second proven, and the third proven so far as the assault was concerned, but only partially so as regarded the intent. The Synod of Glasgow and Ayr confirmed the judgment of the Presbytery on the first count, reversed it on the second, and confirmed it on the third in so far as it was in Mr. MacMillan's favour, and reversed it in so far as it was adverse to him;—in other words, found all the other counts not proven.[1] In this

[1] It should be stated that in Scottish Ecclesiastical procedure the only issue is *Proven* or *Not Proven*. This is substantially identical with the English

judgment of the Synod, Mr. MacMillan of course acquiesced, but a minority of the Synod dissented and complained[1] to the General Assembly, while the Presbytery also protested and appealed. After pleadings at the bar the Assembly, by a majority of 111 (152-41), found the first charge not proven, the second proven, and the third proven, not merely as the Presbytery had found it, but as originally libelled. It was then agreed to unanimously that Mr. MacMillan be suspended *sine die*, and loosed from his charge.

Let me now fix the attention of the reader for a moment on the action of the Assembly in reference to the third count. That count, as it stood in the libel originally, was as follows:—"That in this state[2] you did enter the cottage of John Mannors, and remain with the door shut for a protracted period with the wife of the said John Mannors, she being alone, and there *not only made proposals to kiss her, but* did also lay hold of her violently *and immodestly, and dragged her towards the bed to accomplish your criminal object*, so that she cried out, *and fled from your grasp*, and took refuge in a neighbouring house, where she complained of your conduct." The words which I have italicised the Presbytery did not find proven. The Synod found the whole count not proven, and the Assembly found the whole proven. Now it was argued in subsequent proceedings that the Assembly acted *ultra vires* as a court of review, in finding

criminal issue, in which the term *Guilty* and *Not Guilty* mean, and must mean, respectively *Proven* and *Not Proven*, since no man is in the eyes of the law held to be guilty unless he is *proved* to be so. The strangely illogical Scottish issue is discarded in ecclesiastical courts.—T. S.

[1] Here also an explanation is necessary for the uninitiated. A party in a case may *protest and appeal* against a judgment adverse to him. A member of the court which pronounces a judgment of which he disapproves may *dissent and complain* to the Superior Court. In this case the Presbytery of Dunbarton on the one side, and Mr. MacMillan on the other, were parties before the Synod. The Presbytery appealed against the Synod's reversal of their finding, so that the case came before the Assembly on the *dissent and complaint* of a minority of the Synod, and on a *protest and appeal* of the Presbytery.—T. S.

[2] A state of being "the worse for drink."—T. S.

that proven which neither of the inferior courts had found proven. This was pleaded on the one side and controverted on the other. Although not quite on the ground on which it was controverted, I am persuaded that the Assembly was quite within its competency in finding as it did. The appeal of Mr. MacMillan from the finding of the Presbytery brought up the whole case, including the libel itself, to the Synod; and the libel, not merely as a document necessary to make the finding of the Presbytery intelligible, but one on which they were to judge. In fact the Synod were put in the place which the Presbytery had occupied. And the complaint of the minority of the Synod and the appeal of the Presbytery put the Assembly in their place. It is not an unimportant confirmation of this view of the matter that both the Synod and the Assembly gave judgment on the first count of the libel, confirming the Presbytery's verdict of *not proven*, although that count was not brought before the one or the other court either by complaint or appeal. If they had power to affirm, then they had power to reverse or to alter. And as with the first count, so with the third. The analogy of the prerogative of the sovereign to remit or mitigate, but not to increase the punishment awarded by a court, has no application. The sovereign—that is the Home Secretary—is not a court of review. The sentence is final as passed by the criminal court. Only the prerogative of mercy is conferred upon the sovereign by special statute. It cannot touch the sentence. To such an extent is this carried, that in the event of a sentence being afterwards demonstrated to have been erroneous, the sentence still stands, and a full pardon is granted. But in our Presbyterian church courts neither the verdict nor the sentence of the inferior church court is valid without confirmation by the supreme court, provided either the one or the other is brought under its review by complaint or appeal, and when either verdict or sentence is so brought, the function of the higher

court is to judge for itself according to the record presented to it. I believe it would not be incompetent for it even to amend that record by taking additional evidence for itself; although I am not aware that this has ever been done. I have dwelt at some length upon this matter, because of its bearing upon the great constitutional questions which emerged in connection with the Cardross case.

The deliverance of the Assembly on this case was pronounced on the 24th of May 1858. The Presbytery of Dunbarton was ordered to meet,[1] and to take steps for preaching the church vacant.

Two days later the following "note of suspension and interdict" was presented to the Court of Session on behalf of Mr. MacMillan:—

"*Unto the Right Honourable the Lords of Council and Session.*

"Note of Suspension and Interdict for the Rev. John MacMillan, minister of the Free Church, Cardross, complainer against the General Assembly of the Free Church, and the Rev. Alexander Beith, their Moderator; and the Rev. Patrick Clason, D.D., and the Rev. Sir Henry Wellwood Moncreiff, Bart., their principal clerks, respondents.

"That the complainer is under the necessity of applying to your Lordships for suspension and interdict against the said respondents, as will appear to your Lordships from the annexed statement of facts and note of pleas in Law."

[Then follows a paragraph expressing Mr. MacMillan's willingness, if necessary, to find caution for expenses.]

"May it therefore please your Lordships to sustain[2] the proceedings complained of, and to interdict, prohibit, and discharge the said respondents, and the Free Church Pres-

[1] An inferior court cannot meet while the supreme court is sitting, without special permission of the Assembly. It is of constant occurrence that Presbyteries meet in Edinburgh by permission of the Assembly, and not very rarely by its order.—T. S.

[2] Apparently a misprint.—T. S.

bytery of Dunbarton, and the Rev. Colin Mackenzie of Arrochar, or any other party or parties the said respondents may appoint, or have appointed, from proceeding to the complainer's church at Cardross, and declaring or preaching the charge vacant, on Sabbath first, the 30th instant, or on any subsequent day; or to do otherwise in the premises as to your Lordships may seem proper, according to justice, &c.

(*Signed*) "JAS. M. STACEY, S.S.C."

This "note" was presented to Lord Kinloch as Lord Ordinary, and he pronounced the following judgment:—

EDINBURGH, 28*th May* 1858.

"The Lord Ordinary, having considered the foregoing note of suspension and interdict, refuses the same as incompetent.

(*Signed*) "WILLIAM PENNEY."

In our days it is happily unnecessary to vindicate the decisions of our Judges against the supposition that they are the result of conscious partiality on the part of those who pronounce them. But Judges, as well as other men, have unconscious partialities, and like other men, see things only with the eyes which they bring to the seeing of them. It may therefore not be improper to state that Lord Kinloch was not a Free Churchman, but an attached member of the Established Church. While at the bar, as Mr. Penney, he was regarded as one of the highest authorities on ecclesiastical law; and at the Disruption it was matter of regret, on account of his high Christian character, that he was not found along side of the Murray Dunlops, and the Hamiltons, and the Graham Spiers and the Earle Monteiths; but he was never charged with inconsistency. He was throughout, before and after the Disruption, a consistent and decided anti-Free Churchman. It was therefore an absolutely unbiassed judgment that he gave in so summarily dismissing Mr. MacMillan's application.

This matter was brought before the Assembly on the 28th May by Dr. Candlish, who moved that "the Assembly,

having heard the said note read, and finding that it purports to be, on the part of Mr. MacMillan, an application to the civil court to suspend and interdict the sentence pronounced in his case on the morning of the 25th May, and to interdict the execution of the same, resolve to cite Mr. MacMillan to appear at their bar on Tuesday, 1st June, at 12 o'clock, to answer for his conduct thereanent, with certification, and grant warrant accordingly." This motion was unanimously agreed to.

On the 1st of June, however, just before 12 o'clock, it was announced to the Assembly that a messenger-at-arms was at the door, waiting to serve a document on the Assembly, with a legal warrant to do so. He was immediately admitted, handed a paper to the Moderator, and withdrew. This was a summons at the instance of Mr. MacMillan, of like purport with his note of suspension and interdict quoted above. This had barely been read when, it being 12 o'clock, Mr. MacMillan was called and took his place at the bar, when the following scene ensued:—

"Dr. CANDLISH.—I move that the Moderator be requested to put to Mr. MacMillan the following question:—Was this step—viz., applying to the Lord Ordinary for a decree of suspension and interdict against carrying into effect the sentence pronounced by this General Assembly in your case—taken at your instance and by your authority? Yea or nay?

"This being approved of, the Moderator put the question.

"Mr. MACMILLAN.—I understand my agent——

"The MODERATOR.—Yea or nay? I want a categorical answer.

"Mr. MACMILLAN.—Yes.

"Dr. CANDLISH.—I move that the party be removed from the bar. (Cries of 'Agreed.')

"Mr. MacMillan was then removed;[1] and

[1] Not physically, of course. The expression is a technical one, intimating that the party has no longer the right to plead his cause.—T. S.

"Dr. CANDLISH said—Moderator, I have now to discharge a very solemn duty, and to move this General Assembly that Mr. John MacMillan be deposed from the office of the holy ministry."

This motion was seconded by Dr. Bannerman, and unanimously agreed to. The sentence of deposition was then solemnly pronounced. A special committee was then appointed to watch over the case, with authority to take such steps as might seem to them necessary or expedient, and to report to the Commission at any of its stated diets, and to next Assembly.

Without disputing the competency of this proceeding, I must be allowed to say that I regret the abruptness of it. I cannot see how any Presbyterian can doubt that an application by a minister to the civil court to suspend and annul a sentence of the General Assembly was an offence meriting deposition. In other words, had a libel been framed, there could have been no question of its relevancy. Neither was there any doubt that Mr. MacMillan had been guilty of this offence. Therefore I hold that the procedure was competent. But I wish that he had been dealt with by the Assembly, or by his Presbytery on remit by the Assembly, with a view of convincing him of the heinousness of his offence and leading him to repentance. It will be noted that the reception accorded to Mr. MacMillan when he appeared at the bar of the Assembly was not strictly in accordance with the terms of the citation calling him to appear. That bore that he was to "*answer for* his conduct anent" the application to the civil court. Now, I submit that that meant something more than his merely answering the question whether or not he had made such application. It cannot be argued that the action of Mr. MacMillan subsequent to the citation justified the severity of the procedure, which had reference only to the note of suspension and interdict, and not at all to the issue or service of the summons. Be all this as it may, a

process that might prove to be of immense importance, not to the Free Church only, but to all Churches of the land, had been actually instituted by Mr. MacMillan.

Mr. MacMillan lost no time in raising a second action. As in the former he pleaded that he had suffered injury in respect of income, character, and feelings through wrongful action of the General Assembly in suspending him from the ministry, so in the latter he maintained that he had suffered in like manner through equally wrongful action of the same Assembly in deposing him. The second action differed from the first in that it was directed not only against the General Assembly, its Moderator and Clerks, but also against Dr. Beith, Dr. Candlish, and Dr. Bannerman as individuals, and that it claimed damages from them. These parties are summoned to appear on a certain day before the Court, "and to bring with them and produce the said sentence, resolution, or proceedings, and whole grounds and warrants upon which the same proceeded, all to be seen and considered by our said Lords, and to hear and see the same, with all that has followed or may follow thereon, reduced, restricted, rescinded, cassed, annulled, decerned and declared to have been from the beginning, to be now, and in all time coming null and void, and of no avail, force, strength, or effect, and to have no faith in judgment; or outwith the same, the pursuer, the Rev. John MacMillan, reponed and restored against the same *in integram.*"

This is manifestly a declaration of war to the knife. The Court of Session is represented simply as a court of appeal, standing in the same relation to the General Assembly of the Free Church in which that Assembly stands to its Synods, or these to the Presbyteries. The actions were, with consent of parties, combined, and came before Lord Benholm as Lord Ordinary, who dismissed them on the ground of the incompetency of the civil court to review ecclesiastical decisions. Against this finding Mr. MacMillan appealed to the

First Division of the Court. As I said of Lord Kinloch, so I may say of Lord Benholm, that he was not a member of the Free Church, and that he was of high repute as a lawyer, and was held in universal esteem as a Christian man. Mr. MacMillan's counsel were Mr. Patton (afterwards Lord Manor), Mr. Dundas Grant, and Mr. Macfarlane (afterwards Lord Ormidale). Those of the defendants were Mr. Moncreiff, Mr. Young, and Mr. Rutherford Clark, all of whom are now on the Bench. Mr. Patton having withdrawn from the case on account of ill health, his place was taken by Mr. Fraser (now Lord Fraser). It is an indication of the vast importance that was attached to the case that, of the seven men employed in it, six were on their way to the Bench.

The question which came before the Court of Session was twofold; *first*, as to the right of jurisdiction, and *secondly*, as to the merits of the case. In the estimation of the Church, the former was all in all. They felt that if it were conceded that the Court of Session might review a sentence of the Supreme Court of the Church, spiritual independence was at an end. Mr. MacMillan in his summons had claimed that the defendants should "bring with them and produce the sentence, resolution or proceedings, and whole grounds or warrants upon which the same proceeded." It was substantially on the incompetence of the Court to order this that the favourable decisions of the two Lords Ordinary (Kinloch and Benholm) were based. But the First Division took the opposite view. They gave an order for what is technically called the "satisfying of production." The meaning of this was precisely what was stated in Mr. MacMillan's document already quoted, viz., that the Court should have before them (1) the constitution of the Free Church and the rules of procedure of her Courts, and (2) the action of the General Assembly in Mr. MacMillan's case, in order that the Court might judge whether that action had been in accordance with

that constitution and those rules. In this was necessarily implied that if they should find a want of accordance they should "reduce, restrict, rescind, cass, and annul" the whole procedure, and "restore and repone" Mr. MacMillan as minister of the Free Church of Cardross. I may say here that the judges stated that it might be found that they had not the power to do all that was asked of them; indeed, they admitted that they could not annul the deposition and repone Mr. MacMillan in Cardross; but they held that they were entitled to have the documents judicially before them, that they might judge of Mr. MacMillan's claim to any remedy, such, for example, as damages, which it might be competent for them to award him. They therefore ordered that production should be satisfied. Let it be distinctly understood what this meant. Of course, the documents which were ordered to be produced were patent to all the world. The constitution of the Free Church was notorious. The whole proceedings in the Cardross Case had been published in all the Scottish newspapers, and the judges were perfectly acquainted with them, and the Church was not asked to produce a single scrap over and above what had been so published. Why, then, did she refuse to produce them? Not merely on the Dogberrian principle that though reasons were as plenty as blackberries, she would not give one on compulsion; but on the ground that the producing them for the end for which they were demanded would have been to acknowledge the right of the civil court to constitute itself a court of appeal over her supreme court. That acknowledgment she could not make without abandoning her proper position, and sacrificing that principle which she regarded herself as specially called of God to defend. She believed, and was prepared to maintain, that the Assembly had done Mr. MacMillan no wrong. But she was bound to maintain that even if wrong had been done him, the Court of Session had no competency to redress that wrong. Her one plea was, I am a Church

of Christ, in which "the Lord Jesus Christ, as King and Head of the Church, has appointed a government in the hands of church-officers, distinct from, and not subordinate to, civil government, and that the civil magistrate does not in its own province possess jurisdiction or authoritative control over the regulation of the affairs of Christ's Church." She admitted, of course, that her Assemblies might err; but she maintained that the Court of Session had no more right to rectify their errors than her Assemblies had to rectify errors into which the Court of Session might fall. Here a distinction was made by the judges. What you say, they sometimes argued, might be a good argument in the mouth of the Established Church, for her courts have a legislative recognition, and it may be pleaded that their jurisdiction is co-ordinate with the jurisdiction of the civil courts. But you have no courts or jurisdiction in the proper sense. You are simply an association, like a temperance society, or an agricultural society, or a jockey club, or whatever other body of men associated for a not illegal purpose; and what you call your courts are as much amenable to the courts of the country as are the committees of such associations. In answer to this argument I would say, *first* of all, that I am sure that all right-minded and intelligent members of the Established Church would scornfully repudiate the distinction laid down, which means that the courts of the Established Church have no judicial power except in so far as it is given them by the Legislature. Then I would say, *secondly*, that there is no kind or degree of persecution which this principle would not cover. It is involved in the very idea of toleration that every branch of the Church, established or non-established, shall be free to exercise her own discipline, in respect of matters spiritual and ecclesiastical, over her own members. The plea of the Free Church throughout was, that she had a right to do what she had done, and that even if in any case she did wrong, the Court of Session had no power or authority to review or

reverse her proceedings. The case was a very protracted one. The Assembly eventually consented to "satisfy production" under protest, in order that the case might go on, and that the decision of the House of Lords might be got on the points at issue. Unhappily this object was not attained; for the Court eventually non-suited Mr. MacMillan, on merely technical grounds. The Assembly, of course, could not appeal a case which had, on whatever grounds, been decided in their favour; and Mr. MacMillan did not carry the case to the House of Lords. The principle, therefore, is still undecided; and however desirable it may be that it were decided, one cannot wish that another case might give occasion for its decision.

Let it be noted what it was that constituted Mr MacMillan's offence. It was not the making *an* application to the Court of Session, but his making *the* application which he did make. Had he asked the Court of Session to find that he was entitled to his stipend and his manse and his salary as Synod-Clerk, notwithstanding his suspension from the ministry, the Assembly would have been bound to admit the competence of his action. But when he asked the Court to annul the sentence itself, he clearly put himself in an attitude of rebellion against his Church, and so flagrantly violated his ordination vows as to necessitate his deposition. The Free Church has always acknowledged that all questions respecting property, which may arise between her and either her own members or outside parties, may be adjudicated by the civil courts. She claims for herself no immunity whatever from the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts respecting such matters. But if the civil court shall ever claim the right to "reduce, restrict, rescind, cass, annul, and declare to have been and to be in the past, the present, and the future, null and void" a sentence solemnly pronounced by her Supreme Court, then the Church must, of course, "take the wrong;" but she will submit to it no otherwise than as to persecution.

Dr. Begg was for some time Convener of the Assembly's Committee on this momentous case; and proved himself at once a vigorous and a judicious champion of the cause of Christian liberty.

CHAPTER XLV.

SABBATH OBSERVANCE—ROMANIST PRISONERS—INNOVATIONS IN WORSHIP—ATTACK IN HOUSE OF COMMONS—READING SERMONS—EQUAL DIVIDEND—ANTI-ROMISH AGITATION — SABBATH DESECRATION — PROTESTANT INSTITUTE—PRESBYTERIANISM.

At the beginning of the year 1863 we find Dr. Begg contending with his usual energy and unwearying perseverance for the sanctity of the Sabbath. At the annual meeting of the "Sabbath Alliance of Scotland" he moved, "That it is the duty of the people of this country to watch over every attempt to secularise the Lord's Day, whether by turning it into a day of work or a day of amusement; and, in particular, to resist the attempt which will, in all probability, be renewed to open the Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh on that day." This matter was one that was occupying much of public attention at that time. A petition had been sent to the Lords of the Treasury, signed by 14,000 persons, for the opening of the garden. This was met by a counter-petition with 36,000 signatures. Of course, as in every such case, statements were made that the signatures to the latter petition were not genuine, that some of the signatories were children, that others had signed under compulsion or under the influence of misrepresentation. Of course I know nothing of the facts relating to this particular petition. But I do know that a phenomenon almost as regular as sunrise is the making of such assertions respecting the signing of petitions. I cannot recall an instance in which attempts were not made to discredit numerously signed petitions by such assertions. The matter was, in the course of the year, brought before Parliament, and the proposal to open the garden was

negatived by a small majority; and some of those who voted for its rejection were at pains to explain that they did so, not in accordance with their own views, but in deference to Scottish prejudice. Among these, I am sorry to say, was the Prime Minister (Lord Palmerston). The conclusion of Dr. Begg's speech on the subject is well worth quoting:—

"I heartily sympathise with the feelings of the working men on this subject, for no men worked so hard to procure signatures against the proposal to open the gardens as these men did. I hold that to turn the Lord's Day into a day of amusement, is to act in open defiance of the commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy. We must exert ourselves to resist any attempt to turn the Lord's Day into a day of amusement; and more especially should it be so altered by the authority of the Government of the country. I trust, therefore, that not only will the Sabbath Alliance set its face in opposition to such an innovation, but that over the entire kingdom our hands will be strengthened to resist this encroachment. The question at issue is not a mere local one between parties who wish to open the gardens and the Christian community of Edinburgh, but it is a question of the preservation of the Sabbath for the whole of Scotland; and I trust, therefore, our fellow-Christians in other parts of the country will come forward to assist us in concentrating our efforts to the accomplishment of the great object we have in view. The Sabbath is one of the greatest boons we possess, and should be jealously guarded. Well does the poet say—

'O day most calm, most bright,
The fruit of this, the next world's bud,
Th' endorsement of supreme delight,
Writ by a Friend, and with His blood;
The couch of time; care's balm and bay;
The week were dark but for thy light;
Thy torch doth show the way.

'Sundays the pillars are
On which Heaven's palace arched lies;
The other days fill up the spare
And hollow room with vanities.
They are the fruitful beds and borders
In God's rich garden; that is bare
Which parts their ranks and orders.'"

He brought the same subject before the Presbytery on the 25th of February, and made a long and eloquent speech on the subject in a public meeting held in Edinburgh on the 27th of April. While many of the friends of the Sabbath acted energetically, it is not too much to say that we are indebted to no one man more than to Dr. Begg for the immunity we still enjoy from this form of Sabbath desecration. At the same meeting of Presbytery he moved for a petition in opposition to the Prison Ministers' Bill. This was a Government measure for the endowment of Romanism, by permitting the persons who have charge of prisons to appoint and pay ministers of any religious body for ministering to the prisoners of their own denomination, provided there were in the prison a certain number belonging to that denomination. This would have been of little benefit to any but the Romanists; and it was advocated by the Home Secretary professedly in their interests. The Presbytery, of course, agreed unanimously to his proposal. As convener of the Assembly's Committee on Popery he brought the same matter before the March Commission in a speech which must be quoted because of its permanent interest. Were it given without the date, the reader might suppose that it was spoken twenty-three years later than it was:—

"Dr. BEGG, on the part of the Committee on Popery, said he had to lay on the table of the Commission a bill entitled the Prison Ministers' Bill; and he would briefly state the reasons why it was the opinion of the Committee that the Commission should petition against the measure. It was the first measure of the kind that had come before the Parliament and the country. Previous and subsequent to the admission of Romanists into Parliament, there was an impression in certain quarters that Romanists were in favour of what is called the voluntary system of supporting ministers, and would refuse to receive grants from Government in support of their priesthood. Of course, those who were aware of the true nature of the Romish system never participated in that belief, but

were always persuaded that it was part of the peculiarities of Romanism that she desired to interweave herself with every Government, and to use every Government for the purpose of advancing her interests. Accordingly it was alleged that, at the time of the passing of the Roman Catholic Emancipation Act, when some one asked, 'What can thirty, forty, or fifty members in the House of Commons do, when there are 650 members of that House altogether?' an Irishman replied, 'Thirty or forty foxes are more than equal to 600 geese any day.' And although he would not speak so irreverently of the House of Commons, their experience unfortunately proved that those Roman Catholic members who had found admission into the House of Commons had exercised a most wonderful influence in the direction of securing support for their own church. He needed not to refer to the many grants already passed; but, in reference to prisons, a movement was originated in 1853; while last year a bill was laid on the table of the House of Commons whose object was to compel all those who managed prisons, wherein a certain number of Romish prisoners were found, to support a Romish priest in connection with such prisons. That bill was thrown out after a very considerable struggle; and the reason why he referred to it at all was, that Sir George Grey, in introducing the measure now before the House, stated that that measure was introduced to redeem the pledge which had been given them when the previous bill was withdrawn; and further that, although that bill took cognisance of all non-established denominations, it would operate chiefly in the direction of supporting priests of the Church of Rome, for this reason, that the adherents of the Church of Rome formed a very large quota of the inmates of prisons. At the present moment the proportion of Romish prisoners in Great Britain was very great. In the convict prisons it amounted to 18 per cent. of the whole; in the borough and county jails of England to 17 per cent. of the whole; in Scotland, to 23 per cent. of the whole; while 86 per cent. of the whole criminals of Ireland were Roman Catholics. Now, if it was a good argument for providing Roman Catholic chaplains at the public expense, that a large proportion of the prisoners were Roman Catholics, it would also be made use of for the purpose of establishing

priests in the workhouses of the country, because the proportion of Romanists there was also very great. . . . To his thinking, however, the argument told precisely in the opposite way; because it seemed to him that the fact that Romanists were found to be criminals in a very large proportion was a reason why no encouragement should be given to that system. It was very like what used to take place in Glasgow at the illuminations in connection with the king's birthday. He remembered that whenever an illumination took place in Glasgow, the glaziers mustered in great strength, and proceeded to break windows in every direction, and then they came next morning and offered to mend the windows for a certain amount. That seemed very like the argument that, because many Romanists were criminals, Romish priests should be paid to take charge of them,—the difference being that the glaziers did really mend the windows, whereas the result of this movement would not in the least be to mend the matter in regard to criminals. . . . Of course, they could not shut their eyes to the fact that the thirty-two Irish members in the House of Commons exerted a most powerful influence both on the Government and the Opposition. These thirty-two members counted sixty-four in every division of the House of Commons. Having thrown themselves into different scales alternatively,[1] they were prepared to support any Government that would support them, and to oppose any Government that would oppose them."

On the same subject he proposed an overture to the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, which was unanimously transmitted.

The controversy about the distribution of the Sustentation Fund had become less violent, but was threatening to become chronic. On the 2d of April Dr. Begg addressed to the *Witness* a letter, the gist of which is contained in the following paragraph :—

"By means of the equal dividend, the Free Church has accomplished two objects, which, so far as I know, have been, and can be, accomplished in no other way. She has,

[1] "Alternately."—*T. S.*

by means of voluntary contributions, planted what is to all intents and purposes a national church; and she has secured to her ministers the highest *minimum* stipend of any church in the world. If she is now contented—as I am sure she is not—to see the mass of her rural and Highland congregations swept away, and to sink into a mere ordinary denomination, existing, but with vastly diminished influence, in large towns and populous places, and with every minister depending entirely on his own congregation, she will tamper with this equal dividend."

A week later, Dr. Begg introduced into the Presbytery of Edinburgh an overture on innovations in public worship in these terms, "That the General Assembly shall adopt some effectual plan to prevent the introduction into any of our congregations of unauthorised innovations in the public worship of God." As this is a subject which henceforth occupied a great amount of his thought, and as he incurred a good deal of ridicule in connection with it, it will be right to say that he, in his speech on this occasion, laid down principles which seem to be incontrovertible. He divided questions with respect to worship into two classes: *first*, those which are put by Divine authority beyond the reach of the Assembly itself; *secondly*, matters of order and arrangement that were simple and proper in themselves, and conduced greatly to the peace, comfort, and good order of worship, which might be regarded as matters of human arrangement; and he thought he would state, before he was done, not only possible cases of this kind, but matters in which he, for one, should be quite prepared, and should even like, "to see some little change." With respect to the latter class of matters, he seemed to hold that the General Assembly ought authoritatively to regulate them, and that neither individuals nor kirk sessions were entitled to alter the *status quo* without the sanction of the Assembly. It may, I think, be a subject for consideration whether there be not a third class of matters in respect of which kirk sessions may intro-

duce variations by their own authority—subject, of course, to complaint or appeal to the higher courts—and even a fourth class, in regard to which individual worshippers may be left to their own discretion and sense of propriety. It was upon such matters that the discussion in the Presbytery chiefly turned. The Assembly had not yet interposed to authorise innovations on matters which Dr. Begg and many others regarded—rightly, I think—as lying without and beyond their province. There was, therefore, as yet no controversy as to the limits of the Assembly's power; the only question was as to the restriction by the Assembly of the power of congregations. The transmission of the overture was carried by a majority of twenty-one (28—7).

The question of union between the non-established Presbyterian Churches of Scotland, which had been long discussed in private, was brought before the Synod on the 28th, and before the Presbytery on the 29th of April. As this question occupied a very large proportion of Dr. Begg's thoughts, and called forth an immense amount of his energy, for the next ten years, I think it will be well to give a continuous narrative of the movement in a separate chapter.

In the House of Commons, on the 7th of May, an attack was made on Dr. Begg which caused considerable annoyance to his friends. In the debate in committee on the Prison Ministers' Bill, Lord Elcho said:—

"There was undoubtedly a strong feeling in Scotland on this subject. The Scotch Reformation Society had published an analysis of the division which took place on the second reading of the bill, and they divided the Scotch members of that House into three categories—first, those who had voted for the bill; secondly, those who had stayed away, of whom it was said that their absence on such a vital question ought to be held by the electors as equivalent to voting in favour of the bill, unless some satisfactory explanation was given; and, thirdly, those excellent gentlemen who voted against the

bill. But another paper accompanied that analysis, and in it some very strong language was used, to the effect that if the bill passed, the Roman Catholic prisoners would be left to be taught in a manner contrary to the Word of God. And on the other side of that paper were certain resolutions passed by the Scotch Reformation Society. The first expressed regret at the second reading of the bill. The second expressed regret that the leading persons in the state should have supported so obnoxious a measure; the third—which almost amounted to a breach of the privileges of that House—called attention to the fact that 'no gentleman from Scotland rose to give utterance to the strong indignation felt against this new system of Popish endowment;' and expressed a hope that 'this unsatisfactory state of matters will engage the serious attention of the constituencies of Scotland when a new Parliament is to be elected.' If that was not dictation to the Scotch members as to the course they were to pursue, he did not know what was; for if any honourable gentleman from Scotland should act as he thought it his duty to do by his country and all classes of his countrymen, he was to be held up and denounced to his constituents."

I am confident that no reasonable man will deem that his lordship's views of parliamentary privilege merit any other comment than simple ridicule. But it is not with him or his views that we have to do, but with a subsequent speaker, whose speech must be given in full:—

"Mr. BAXTER said that in the jails in Scotland there was nothing to prevent the clergy of any denomination having access to the prisoners belonging to their own communion. The bill was therefore unnecessary. The Roman Catholic priest most zealously visited the Roman Catholic prisoners in the jail of Dundee. He objected to the alteration of the law in regard to Scotland. It would prevent the visits of missionaries, whose assiduities had often been found most useful. He was glad that the noble lord (Elcho) had drawn attention to the extremely improper circular from the Scottish Reformation Society, and he deserved thanks for drawing attention to the circular. In his humble opinion that Society

was doing a great deal of harm to Protestantism, not only in Scotland, but in this country. That Society seemed to be kept up for the special benefit of one particular clergyman, who, instead of attending to his own duties, went about lecturing on his favourite topic throughout the country. He must deprecate in the strongest terms that spiritual terrorism which had been brought to bear in Scotland by certain clerical agitators in opposition to the bill. He should support the amendment of the hon. and learned member for Bute, but without being influenced in the slightest degree by any fear for the Protestant institutions of the country."

Dr. Begg could afford to let this unmannerly attack pass unnoticed. But the members and office-bearers of Newington were naturally indignant. The elders held a meeting, and requested Mr. John Dick, as their chairman, to write to Mr. Baxter on the subject. Mr. Dick asserted in the strongest terms "that the whole pastoral duties of this congregation are discharged by Dr. Begg with the utmost regularity and efficiency, and that, whilst as opportunity offers in the Church courts of which he is a member, and elsewhere, Dr. Begg never shrinks from expressing his views on the moral and religious questions of the day, it is a mistake to suppose that he goes about Scotland in the way you have described." Of Mr. Baxter's reply I leave to every reader to form his own judgment. It was as follows:—

"House of Commons Library, 15*th May*, 1863.

"Sir,—I have received your favour of yesterday's date. The report of the debate on Thursday week was a mere abridgment, as is often the case when the House is in Committee, and more particularly when a Scotch matter is under discussion. The words quoted in your letter are not the very words I used; and I certainly did not say, or mean to imply, that any one neglected his ministerial duties for the sake of a society which is rendering the cause of Protestantism ridiculous, and offending its best friends.—I am, &c.,

"W. E. Baxter."

"John Dick, Esq.,
"12 *Arniston Place, Edinburgh.*"

In one respect this letter is creditable to its writer. It is so clumsily and feebly done that it is evidently the production of a novice in evasion.

It will be remembered that on the last day of 1862 Dr. Begg carried the transmission of an overture by the Presbytery on the subject of the reading of sermons. The overture came up in the General Assembly in connection with the report of the College Committee, and Dr. Begg made a long and effective speech in support of the overture. He was answered in one still longer, and, as I think, more effective, by his friend Dr. Nixon of Montrose. Others also contributed materially to the interest of the discussion. Still, it seems to me that the arguments on the two sides ran in opposite but parallel directions, and did not in reality meet each other. Dr. Begg showed the evils of the one method, and Mr. Nixon showed the evils of the other. Each might have agreed with all that the other said, for no one would deny that evils and imperfections attach to everything that is human. I stated, in a previous chapter (p. 328), that I am now more favourable than I was twenty years ago to not-reading. But yet I should greatly deplore the prohibition of reading either by statute or by public opinion. I believe that by the reading of *some* a higher standard of preaching is maintained than would be if there were none who read, and that the maintenance of this acts beneficially on those who do not read as well as on those who do. It seems manifest that there are really two questions involved. First, if we postulate an identity of the sermon, the question is whether that sermon might be expected to be more effective if well read or if well delivered. I should think few would hesitate to answer this question in accordance with the latter alternative. But then, secondly, there is the question whether throughout the bounds of a large church, and throughout the Sabbaths of a year or of many years, we are likely to get so high an average of thought and of good composition in the sermons if the

preachers were virtually prohibited from reading, as we might reasonably expect did some read, and many, probably the great majority, did not. I repeat what I have said in substance already,—I should be sorry if we had no readers; I should be sorry if we had very many.

A very important debate took place in this Assembly on the subject of the Sustentation Fund. A proposal was made by the Committee, which may be briefly stated thus: That the equal dividend should be £137 (the dividend of the preceding year), and that every congregation which contributed more than they had contributed in the preceding year should get back their increase (over and above the £137) up to £13. It does not clearly appear what was to be made of increased contributions of congregations which amounted to more than £13. This proposal was evidently faulty in many particulars. It gave, for example, the same advantage to congregations which in the previous year had contributed far less than they ought as to those which in that year had fairly done their duty. Suppose, for instance, two congregations had each in the previous year contributed £100, and that in the one case that sum was all that the congregation could afford, and that in the other it was much less than they could afford. Suppose that the former did not increase their contribution because they could not, and that the latter increased theirs by £13, as they could well do. The minister of the former congregation would get £137, and the minister of the latter would get £150, the additional £13 being a premium to the minister, awarded not because his congregation were doing their duty now, but because they had failed to do their duty before. Then there is another anomaly. One congregation might in the preceding year, have contributed £500 and another £50. For some good reason—the death or removal, for example, of the largest contributor—the former does not increase its contribution, but the latter contributes £63. The minister of the latter gets £150, and that of the former

gets £137. Of course, it may be said that the minister of the former would certainly be getting a supplement from his people, and the minister of the latter would probably be getting none from his. This is true; and it certainly goes some way to correct the anomaly, but it does not remove it.

This proposal was very strenuously resisted by Dr. Begg, who moved a resolution for the maintenance of the equal dividend, pure and simple. Amongst his innumerable speeches, I do not think there is one that furnishes a more favourable specimen of his powers as a debater than that in which he introduced this motion. His main argument was, that it would paralyse the ministers in pleading for the fund. A minister urging his people to increase their givings would be pleading for himself instead of pleading—as under the equal dividend system—for the whole Church.

"I wish you to see that it is a selfish element that you are attempting to introduce into the fund when you say that, beyond a certain point reached last year, all the money, up to £150, should go to the ministers.[1] With what decency can those ministers stand up before their congregations and plead for the General Sustentation Fund in that case, when every one of them knows that he is pleading for himself—that that £13, if raised, will go into his own pocket?[2] Therefore, I say, you introduce on the very threshold of the proposal the selfish element, coupled with the grand broad principle of united co-operation on the part of ministers. But you also introduce an organic change in connection with

[1] That is, the minister of each particular congregation which increased its givings over those of 1861–62.—T. S.

[2] I venture, with considerable reluctance, to bear personal testimony in confirmation of this view. I was for twenty years minister of a Free Church congregation which was not on the equal dividend, but whose minister received back from the Sustentation Fund what the congregation paid into it. During all that time I never once, in the pulpit, or in the Deacons' Court, or in congregational meetings, made the slightest allusion to the givings of the congregation to the Sustentation Fund, because these givings were simply givings to me. Had the congregation been on the "platform," I should have had no difficulty in inducing a most loving people to give a much larger sum (proportionally) to the Sustentation Fund than they actually gave to it.—T. S.

the feelings of the congregation. Agreeing, as I do, with most of what Dr. Buchanan stated, I never did agree with the broad statement that very few of the congregations were unable to add £13 to the sum contributed to the Sustentation Fund. If that be true, we have a great many most guilty congregations. If they can do it easily,—if there are very few who cannot do it,—that argues a very sad state of things. I am prepared to admit that some who could do it don't; but I, for one, believe there are hundreds of congregations that would find it difficult, if not impossible, to add that £13. I can imagine this even in congregations that are at present more than self-sustaining. They have screwed up their contributions to the uttermost, and they may, by the loss of rich individual members, or otherwise, be unable to add £13."

The conclusion of the speech was in the speaker's best style :—

"I believe, throughout the world at present, men are casting in their mind this question,—How the Christian Church, divorced from and disowned by the State, may maintain herself not only in a feeble existence, stooping to base acts on the part of ministers for a poor living, but maintaining an independent way, and, to use the image of a respected ex-Moderator, maintaining ourselves in such substantial comfort that the lifeboat is better than the ship. We must hold out to the timid men in various districts of England and the world, when they ask, What must we do now that Romanism and infidelity are setting in like a flood? Are we to remain in this ark with the clean and the unclean beasts? We must tell these men to go forth and take God for their support, and His providence for their garners, and point to our own noble Sustentation Fund as a proof that their trust will not be misplaced. I say, let us maintain the system, at least in the meantime, until we find some good reason, which I don't know of at present, for changing it. Let us say to all these men, We may not have been able to secure affluence by leaving an Established Church, but at all events we have no beggars among our ministers; all our ministers have a competency at least, and are above actual want. Their heads are kept above water by means of this equal divi-

dend; and if you choose to cast yourselves on the providence of God, most undoubtedly you may expect to be similarly treated in His gracious mercy. . . . At the time when you were trying another revolutionary plan, £127 was the point you proposed to fix. If the ministers had agreed to that—and some were too apt, for my taste, to agree to it—you would not only have destroyed the fund, but, on your own showing, you would not have reached the point now attained. We are presently at £137 to each minister. It is not riches, but it is at least above starvation. It is a thing not lightly to be thrown away. I have no doubt in my own mind, if you destroy the existing arrangement, all your unions will not compensate for the mischief you will do to an influential Church, stretching from sea to sea, with respectable ministers in rural districts labouring successfully and happily, in defiance of the frowns of wealth and the mere popular feeling. Still, it is our duty to ply every moral argument for the purpose of increasing the fund. As to those ministers who will not hear appeals on moral grounds, although mere printed letters are of no use, the story of the grandfather of our respected Clerk may apply. When a young advocate in the General Assembly said, 'I do not know,' the answer was, 'You do not know? I'll make you for to know.'[1] I would make them know how much is at stake, and instead of stirring up this ferment of irritation, and circulating mere printed letters, I would get kindly, large-hearted men, who can speak to the people, to go down to our congregations and explain what mighty issues are involved. And in the meantime I would not alter a single financial principle of this Free Church, but would stand as we are."

A motion was made by Dr. Candlish that the proposal should be remitted to a committee to report to a future diet of the same Assembly, and an animated discussion ensued. Dr. Begg replied in a humorous speech, and on the vote

[1] Half the point of this traditional anecdote is lost when it is put in print. The fine old baronet not only stuck by the archaism of "for to," but he pronounced strongly the initial letter of the word *know*. When he was interrupted in a speech by the exclamation, "I don't know that," he immediately replied, "The young gentleman does not *k*enow! I will make him for to *k*enow."—T. S.

being taken, his motion was carried by a majority of 104 (259—155).

It was well that this resolution was come to. It had indeed become evident, and gradually became more so, that the equal dividend system required some modification. But the proposal of 1863 was altogether a bad one. The system afterwards adopted, as will be seen in the sequel, if not altogether unexceptionable, was at all events very much better. The Church owes not a little to Dr. Begg for his strenuous and successful opposition to this proposal, albeit he opposed it on grounds not altogether tenable.

Reserving for future notice, according to the intention already stated (see p. 348), Dr. Begg's action in this Assembly with respect to the proposal for union with other Churches, I have to notice a somewhat painful matter in connection with the discussion on the subject of Romanism. Dr. Begg gave in the report of the Committee on Popery, and supported it in a characteristic speech, from which I give a short extract:—

"Rome is wise enough to know that she can carry none of her measures except by a process of importunity. The Prison Ministers Bill is the fruit of a ten years' struggle on the part of Rome. It was in the year 1853 that the matter was first moved in the House of Commons, and she has kept her object steadily in view since then. The manner in which she proceeds when she has any purpose to gain reminds me of a story that I once heard. An old minister told me that his invariable policy in dealing with his heritors was to this effect. Said he, 'When I wish to get a new stable, or a byre, or garden wall, I always mention it a twelvemonth beforehand, and allow the proposal to seep[1] through the heads of the heritors for a year. By adopting these means I always find that at the end of the twelvemonth they are better prepared to make the concession than if I had pressed my claim when it was made.' There was profound wisdom in this policy, and I have no doubt that Rome is quite up to that kind of wisdom.

[1] That is, "soak" or "filtrate."—T. S.

Moreover, you will find that she is quite up to a similar kind of wisdom, viz., that of making a great demand, and then pretending that she has made a great concession when she takes much less than she asked. Dr. Keith once told me a story of an Aberdeenshire tenant, who went to his landlord and said, 'I must have a new steading.' 'That is impossible,' was the reply. 'I need a new byre and stable at any rate,' was the rejoinder of the importunate tenant. 'I cannot give you that,' said his landlord. 'Then surely ye'll gi'e me a new yett,' said the tenant. 'Certainly,' replied the landlord. 'That was all I wanted,' said the tenant, 'and mair than I expeckit.' That is absolutely the kind of policy that Rome is pursuing, and pursuing with great success."

Dr. Keith's story is a good one, and illustrates one phase of Rome's policy, and the manner in which she occasionally acts. But her more usual mode of procedure would have been better illustrated had the farmer, his mind being set on the new steading, first asked the "yett," then the stable, and then the steading in its entirety;—first toleration, then equality, whether in the form of levelling up or levelling down, then establishment, and then the papal domination in all matters civil and sacred.

In the course of the discussion of this report Mr. Murray Dunlop took exception to the action of "Dr. Begg and his friends" in supporting the annual motion of Mr. Whalley in the House of Commons for the withdrawal of the Maynooth grant. He was himself sincerely opposed to the continuance of the grant, but considered the continuous agitation for its withdrawal impolitic. But with regard to the action of the Reformation Society in the matter of the Prison Ministers Bill, he took quite the same ground that Mr. Baxter had taken in the House of Commons. His language was, of course, milder than that of Lord Elcho and Mr. Baxter; but the mild censure of such a man as the member for Greenock was more galling to Dr. Begg than the bitter attacks of the members for East Lothian and Montrose. However, notwithstanding

the deservedly potent influence of Mr. Dunlop, the Assembly unanimously agreed to petition Parliament for the withdrawal of the Maynooth grant, and to petition the House of Lords to reject the Prison Ministers Bill, which had already passed the House of Commons. It may be stated in passing, that it was in the course of this discussion that Dr. Candlish strongly reprobated the inscription on a monument to the late Prince Consort of a verse from the Apocrypha. By this reprobation he brought on himself abundant obloquy—most unmerited, as I deem.

When the overtures anent innovations in worship were taken up, Mr. Rhenius of Tongland proposed a strong motion in condemnation of them, which, however, was not seconded. Mr. Murray Dunlop moved, and the Earl of Kintore seconded, a motion to the effect that there was no call on the Assembly to take any action in the matter. Dr. Begg moved, and Sir Henry Moncreiff seconded, that a committee be appointed to consider the subject of the overtures, and also the Act of Assembly 1707, and to report to next Assembly. Principal Fairbairn suggested an addition to Mr. Dunlop's motion. This addition having been accepted by Mr. Dunlop, Dr. Begg withdrew his motion, and that of Mr. Dunlop, as amended by Dr. Fairbairn, was unanimously adopted. The finding of the Assembly was therefore the following, the portion which I have put in brackets being Dr. Fairbairn's addition to the deliverance originally proposed:—"The Assembly, deprecating the undue importance apparently attached in many quarters beyond the bounds of this Church to outward postures and forms in the public worship of God, and unwilling to countenance the idea of any such importance by taking any steps which existing circumstances do not imperatively call for, see no occasion for issuing any deliverance on the overtures before them, but take this opportunity of urging on the ministers of this Church the duty of pressing on their people the far superior and paramount importance of their

seeking, by the help of the Holy Ghost, to preserve peace and unity in their congregations, and to worship God, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth, with reverent, fervent, adoring trust and love, through Jesus Christ our Lord [and appoint a Committee to consider generally the legislation of the Church on the subject of the overtures, and report to next Assembly]." This, it will be seen, was merely making Mr. Dunlop's motion to do nothing a preamble to a motion which was substantially the opposite motion of Dr. Begg!

At the meeting of Presbytery at the end of July Dr. Begg brought under the notice of the Presbytery the Sabbath desecration which was likely to ensue in connection with an expected visit of the Channel Fleet to the Firth of Forth. It does not seem that the intervention of the Presbytery was effectual on this occasion, as I find in the *Witness* the following paragraph:—

"The Channel Fleet has been visited by a large number of the public during the last two days. It is to remain in Leith Roads till Wednesday next, when it will sail for the North. We deeply regret to learn that the Admiral has resolved to allow the vessels to be open to the inspection of the public on Sabbath, after divine service in the fleet, which terminates at half-past eleven o'clock in the forenoon. This is a deliberate insult to the feelings of the respectable portion of the Scottish public; and no time should be lost in remonstrating, by means of the telegraph, with the authorities in London, and endeavouring, if possible, to get this resolution of the Admiral changed. When the fleet was formerly here, scenes of the most reprehensible character were carried on on the Lord's Day; and these, there is too much reason to fear, will be increased on the present occasion."

So much for the anticipation by the *Witness*. Here is the account of the fulfilment, as given by the *Scotsman*:—

"Notwithstanding the fulminations of the Free Church Presbytery, the crowd of visitors to the fleet was very large yesterday, and a good deal of what has been designated as 'Sabbath desecration' took place. People flocked to Leith in

thousands; and the appearance which the two piers presented throughout the whole of the day was tenfold more animated than on any of the previous days. Steamers, many of them crammed to the top of the paddle-boxes, plied between the harbour and the fleet, the vessels of which were open to the inspection of the public after eleven o'clock, the close of divine service. The number of people that promenaded on the pier, viewing the vessels from a distance, was greater than has been seen in Leith for years; and at some periods of the day locomotion was considerably impeded by the crowds that swarmed down to the steamers."

Dr. Begg brought the matter before the Commission in August, reading a correspondence that had taken place between the "Sabbath Alliance" on the one side, and the Admiral and the Lords of the Admiralty on the other. Admiral Dacres stated that he was acting according to the regulations laid down by their Lordships, and their Lordships saw no reason for modifying these regulations. Whether it was due to a change in the composition of the Board of Admiralty, or to the fleet having come under the command of an admiral with sounder views than those of Admiral Dacres, I do not know, but I think I am safe in stating that the offence has not been repeated on occasions of subsequent visits of the fleet to our Firth.[1]

For a long time I have had nothing to say about working men's hours; but the subject was never long out of Dr. Begg's mind. On the 23d of September a meeting was held in Edinburgh "for the purpose of hearing an address by the Rev. Dr. Begg on the subject." The address was long and earnest, and was distinguished by strong common sense as well as earnestness. He stated that the great difficulty was to get land on which to build houses, and appealed to the Governors of George Heriot's Hospital, as proprietors of a great breadth of land in and around the city, to feu it at

[1] While this proof is in my hands (14th October 1887), I regret to say that the offence *was* repeated last Sabbath.—T. S.

reasonable rates for the purpose. He referred especially to a plot of thirty acres on the north-east side of the town, which was then let at an annual rent of £10 or £12 per acre, for nursery grounds. He proposed that it should be feued at £20 per acre, and so the Heriot funds would profit to the extent of £300 a year, while at least a small step would be made in the way of lessening a terrible evil. Of course the difficulty was, that the Hospital Trustees thought it more for the interest of the trust to go on receiving the £10 for a few years more, in the hope of getting eventually £30 or £40, than to accept of £20 forthwith.

This year the Social Science Congress was held in Edinburgh, and Dr. Begg took a lively interest in its proceedings. He read three papers; one in the "Social Economy" section, on the necessity of appointing "Public Inspectors for Rural Cottages," and another on "Co-operation as a means of securing Houses for Working Men," and one in a sub-section of the same department, on "The Early Closing Movement." All the papers were remarkably well received, and numerous well-earned compliments were paid to their author. I select a single sentence from the paper on early closing:—"What is wanted above all to give great strength to the movement is some effectual mode of profitably employing the hours of leisure thus abstracted from the drudgery of prolonged toil on the part of our young men. A natural, though a somewhat unreasonable, objection to the whole movement has been, that in proportion to the hours of leisure secured will be the temptations to mischief, on the part of the young men especially, and that you must continue them slaves in order to prevent them from becoming sinners." He brought the same subject of early closing before the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale at its meeting in October, and advocated in connection with it the institution of evening classes in the universities.

The 12th of November 1863 was a red-letter day in Dr.

Begg's calendar. On that day the buildings of the Protestant Institute, on the George IV. Bridge, Edinburgh, were opened. Dr. Begg, on the occasion, presided over a large meeting, and delivered a long and earnest address. It may be stated that on the opening day the building was free of debt with the exception of £843. A few weeks before the debt was £2000. It was reduced to the amount just stated by one donation of £200, three of £100, three of £50, four of £25, three of £20, one of £15, fourteen of £10, thirty-four of £5, and small sums amounting in all to £22. Within a very short time the deficit of £843 was made up, and a small balance left "to the good." It has been stated before that the conception of the Institute was Dr. Begg's. Although he had many zealous fellow-workers in bringing it to a consummation, yet he bore the heavy end of the tree. The Institute has been, in God's hand, the means of doing no little good, and preventing great evil. It still enjoys the services of its first lecturer, Dr. Wylie, while he enjoys enlarged experience and scarcely diminished energy. If matters in the country are not in a better state than they were when he entered on his professorial work—yea, if they be even a little worse—the assertion may be safely made that but for that work they would have been much worse than they are. All over our land there are ministers of several denominations who owe it to the instructions and the impulse given by Dr. Wylie, that they can estimate the character of Romanism in its political and social as well as its theological and ecclesiastical aspects, and that they are able to deal intelligently with its pretensions and its claims. In the Institute buildings accommodation was provided for the Scottish Reformation Society, in whose origination also Dr. Begg had a chief hand; and very deep was the interest that he took in the affairs of both institutions. It was his constant habit while in Edinburgh to pay almost daily visits to George IV. Bridge. Innumerable times, when I wished to

see him, and found that he had gone out—for his hours were earlier than mine—I called at the Reformation Society's office, and either found him in earnest conference with the secretary, Dr. Badenoch in earlier years, and Mr. Divorty latterly, or else learned that he had been there a short time before.

At the meeting of the Presbytery of Edinburgh in November, Dr. Begg proposed an overture to the effect "that the General Assembly shall adopt some effectual means by which to instruct our people in regard to the Scriptural authority of Presbyterian Church government." This had special reference to certain movements which were on foot for effecting a union between the Established Churches of England and Scotland. There was undoubtedly a party in the latter Church prepared to consent to the humiliation of reordination in order to effect such a union. The matter on their part was all the worse, because no one of them, so far as I know, ever intimated that he considered his own Presbyterian ordination invalid or insufficient; and yet it appears that there were some—I hope not many—who would have accepted Episcopal reordination if their acceptance should be deemed by the English bishops indispensable in order to union. Dr. Begg supported his motion in a long and argumentative speech, which was thus characterised by Dr. Ramsay Davidson:—

"Mr. G. R. DAVIDSON expressed the admiration with which he had listened to the way in which Dr. Begg had brought forward and sustained this overture. He never had admired so much before the temper, and at the same time the earnest manner, in which he had so calmly and suitably set it before them."

The motion was seconded by Dr. Thorburn, and supported by Dr. Candlish and Sir Henry Moncreiff, and was agreed to unanimously.

CHAPTER XLVI.

SOCIAL IMPROVEMENT—PORTRAIT—SHORTER CATECHISM —DR. JOHN FORBES—NEWSPAPER ATTACK—PUBLIC. HOUSE LICENSES—CONSECRATION OF CEMETERIES— CRIMINALS—BARBARISM OF SCOTLAND.

On the 27th of January 1864 Dr. Begg made an important speech in the Presbytery of Edinburgh, in which he set forth at considerable length, and with admirable clearness, the principles on which he constantly acted with respect to matters affecting social morality and well-being. Dr. Blaikie proposed an overture "that the General Assembly direct special attention to the relation of Christianity and the Christian Church to social improvement, with the view of determining the most efficient and expedient mode of bringing Christian influence to bear on questions of social improvement." This overture he supported in a speech of great value, in which he laid down the principles which ought to guide Christian men and ministers and churches in a course in which he and Dr. Begg took a more active part than most of their brethren. I may be excused for digressing here, not to pay a compliment to my respected colleague in the New College, but to express my sense of the great value of the service which he has rendered to the cause of humanity and godliness by his intelligent and energetic labours in this field. The motion of Dr. Blaikie was seconded by Mr. David K. Guthrie, a son who has steadily followed in the footsteps of his distinguished father in the path of philanthropy. Then Dr. Begg supported the motion in a speech from which, for the reason stated, I must give passages of considerable length.

"Dr. BEGG said he very cordially supported the transmission of this overture, and he thanked Mr. Blaikie for his very admirable speech in support of it. He liked the overture because it assumed that Christianity, and those by whom it was represented, had much to do with social matters; and he liked it, moreover, because it raised the very important question how the influence of Christianity, and of those who represent it, can be most effectually brought to bear on the promotion of these objects. He was not sure, if he were to come to principles with Mr. Blaikie, and to particulars with his excellent friend Mr. Guthrie, that in every particular he would be found to agree with them, though in general he thought they would very much agree. For example, he was not sure but that rather too much stress had been laid upon the notion that the apostles and early preachers of Christianity did not assail the social evils which existed; for he had no doubt that the principle which they maintained, viz., 'All things whatsoever ye would,' &c., cut directly at the root of social mischiefs. . . . It was perfectly manifest that the Reformers had no scruple at all in dealing with a number of those questions directly, and in a most masterly way. They all knew that at the time of the second Reformation the same views were acted upon. In the Shorter Catechism the principle was laid down; and it was amplified in the Larger Catechism, where it was required of the observers of the Sixth Commandment that they should both preserve their own lives and the lives of others. It was quite manifest that if the promotion of sanitary measures had the direct and demonstrable effect of preserving our own life and the life of others, we were bound to lend our assistance in adopting such measures. Moreover, it would be remembered that in answer to the question, 'What is required in the Eighth Commandment?' it was laid down that we should 'further the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others.' Now we did not generally scruple about the duty of promoting our own estate, and it was only when it came to the question of promoting the wealth of others that we began to boggle. . . . He thought the Word of God contained far more direction and guidance in regard to these questions than many persons were likely to suppose or admit. He maintained that Christ Himself evidently assumed that

the people were to have houses very different from those that they had at present. They all remembered that saying of His, 'Enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut the door,' &c. Now that assumed that the houses inhabited by the people were to have more rooms than one, and assumed that the exercise of private devotion should be carried on in houses where there was a closet; and yet well did they know that one-third of the people of Scotland lived in houses of only one room, and had consequently no privacy for the exercise of their devotions. . . . He hoped that while their Church Courts would exercise due caution in plunging into matters with which they had no concern, they at the same time would not scruple to help forward great social improvements that were inseparably connected with social morality. He believed that Satan gained immense advantage from their abstinence in these matters. He was delighted to find that great progress had been made in connection with these questions; and he thanked Mr. Blaikie cordially for bringing forward his proposal, and he entirely concurred in the proposal to transmit the overture to the Assembly."

It needs scarcely to be told that the whole Presbytery united in the cordial thanks and in the entire concurrence.

In an excellent article on "Christianity and Social Improvement," the *Witness* (January 30, 1864) referred to this action of the Presbytery in the following terms:—"To this hour Scotland, despite her science and her wealth, is deformed by miserable hovels, in which neither health nor decency is possible,—by bothies, hotbeds, we fear, in too many instances, of impiety and vice,—by female barracks, unfavourable to the modesty of woman,—by customs and usages, partly the result of habit and partly of bad regulations, dangerous to all classes. Hitherto Dr. Begg has stood almost alone in his denunciation of these evils, and in his call for reformation. He has already, by his labours, succeeded in forming so far a public opinion on the question, and in effecting no small amount of actual reformation, for which the country will never be able to repay him. Other voices, we are glad to

find, are now beginning to be lifted up, and the movement bids fair to acquire a breadth which augurs well for its speedy success. At last meeting of the Free Presbytery of Edinburgh, as reported in our columns, Mr. Blaikie, of Pilrig Free Church, whose labours in connection with the Pilrig model houses are still in the recollection of our readers, in a spirit not unworthy the great leader in this cause, brought forward an overture on the subject of social improvement, which the Presbytery agreed to transmit to the General Assembly."

At the annual meeting of the Scottish Reformation Society, Dr. Begg moved the adoption of the Report, and gave a cheering account of the work of the Society. He stated that the Society "arose in connection with what was called the Papal Aggression; and in considering their efforts, it was necessary to keep in view the object of that aggression, which was now more perseveringly and successfully prosecuted than ever. It was a great conspiracy, as Lord John Russell called it, of the Romish Church, managed by a number of the ablest men in Europe, to reconquer Britain, and subject it again to the power of the Vatican. . . . And it was truly a great object; for if Great Britain could only be reconquered to the Pope, Romanism would be again dominant in Europe and the world." He then detailed the proceedings of the Society during the year, dwelling especially on the labours of Dr. Badenoch, the secretary of the Society, and on those of Dr. Wylie in connection with the closely associated Protestant Institute. One of the speakers, the Rev. Mr. Traill of Elgin, made a somewhat enigmatical statement, which was afterwards explained. "There is one gentleman specially whom I do not need to name here, who, I think, is especially worthy of our thanks and gratitude. I believe he is here in a somewhat new character to-day, for, if I mistake not, he is to be two-faced. I would venture to say that that is quite a new character for him; for, whether agreeing or differing from my friend on any point, I never did but admire the one-

facedness, the heroic boldness, and frank outspokenness of the man."

The solution of this enigma is contained in the closing proceedings of the meeting, when we are told that "the presentation took place of a full-length portrait of Dr. Begg to the trustees of the Protestant Institute." Most interesting addresses were given by Colonel Davidson, who made the presentation, and by Dr. Lindsay Alexander, who accepted it in name of the Directors, who vied with each other in bearing the strongest testimony to the esteem in which Dr. Begg was held, and to the value of his services in support of every good cause.

I may notice in passing, that the portrait is now supported by a companion, that of Dr. Wylie, presented to the Institute by some of his friends on the occasion of his attaining the semi-centenary of his ministry. It is well that these two friends should be associated in their "counterfeit presentments," as they stood so long shoulder to shoulder in the battle against deadly error and wrong. The only drawback to the satisfaction with which these portraits may be viewed is, that the hall in which they are placed, admirably constructed for its purpose as a lecture-room, allows none but a most unsatisfactory light—whether sunlight or gaslight—to fall on the pictures.

As indicative of the estimation in which Dr. Begg was held as a sort of champion vindicator of the rights and interests of the working classes, I find him stating, in a letter to the *Witness* (23d February 1864), that he had had his attention called "by a deputation" to a proposal which was made about that time, and which has frequently been repeated since, to convert the "Meadow Walk" into an ordinary street. This he describes as "the most Gothic and barbarous proposal which has been made in [his] day," and sets about arguing against it with characteristic ardour.

A public meeting was held on the subject on the 7th of

March, at which Dr. Begg was the chief speaker. In his speech he gave an interesting account of the ways in which properties had been alienated from the people of Edinburgh by the indifference or selfishness of the magistracy of earlier times. "It was certain that the great mass of the property belonging to the city was given away at a merely nominal value, and that it was entirely lost at the present day to the people of Edinburgh. The Meadow Walk might be regarded as one of the crumbs left from this enormous banquet at which our former magistrates and others had helped themselves. He concluded by saying that he hoped the citizens would not permit a single inch of their romantic town to be impaired to suit the convenience of any person whatever."

The attempt to convert this beautiful avenue into a common road is renewed periodically. It was made with more than the usual vigour last year, but was happily defeated by the remonstrance of the medical profession, who declared that the noise and vibration produced by carriage traffic would be hurtful to the patients in the Royal Infirmary—one of the finest hospitals in the world—recently erected in close proximity to the Walk.

In a conference in the Presbytery on Sabbath-schools, Dr. Begg gave utterance to the sentiments which he held all through his life as to the importance of cultivating the memory, and storing it with passages of Scripture and with the Shorter Catechism. "For his own part, he believed that the memory is developed in children at an earlier age than the judgment. He had never had much sympathy with the notion which had prevailed of late years, that because children can commit to memory things which, perhaps, they cannot understand all the meaning of, that this system of teaching is consequently to be regarded as one of 'cramming,' and the children should not, therefore, be taught anything till they were able fully to understand it. Let them take,

for example, the Shorter Catechism. It was quite certain that children might not understand fully the questions and answers of this Catechism; but it was just as certain that, by teaching all young children this Catechism, and having the truths embraced in it early instilled into their minds, that when they grew up to be men and women the most inestimable blessings would result to the country. He thought that the idea that children were not to be taught the Catechism unless they could fully understand all its doctrines at the time was a thorough delusion, from which nothing but superficiality and mischief had resulted to this land." Thoroughly agreeing with this sentiment, I may be excused for interjecting, in illustration of it, an amusing anecdote which was told me many years ago by an intelligent member of Parliament. A few years after the Disruption, two English friends of his had a Scotch shooting, and one day entered into conversation with the keeper on ecclesiastical matters. The keeper expounded to them with great force and clearness the principles of spiritual independence. When they parted from him, one said to the other, "How in the world does that fellow get all that knowledge?" "Oh," replied his friend," it must be from Shorter's Catechism. I'm told it's a wonderful book, that Shorter's Catechism, and that it's by learning it that all the people are so intelligent." "Do you know who Shorter was, or when he lived?" "No, I do not; but he must have been a splendid fellow." And I quite agree with him.

In anticipation of the meeting of the General Assembly of this year, a pretty keen controversy arose as to the appointment of a professor to the Glasgow College. When a vacancy occurs in one of the colleges through the death or resignation of a professor, the Presbyteries and Synods of the Church are asked to submit to the General Assembly the names of candidates. Dr. Hetherington of Glasgow was stricken down with severe and hopeless illness, and a col-

league and successor was to be appointed. Several names were proposed, but practically the candidates were Dr. Islay Burns of Dundee, and Dr. John Forbes of Glasgow. Dr. Begg and I took the leading parts in the nomination of Dr. Forbes in the Presbytery of Edinburgh, and in the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale. I should not have mentioned this controversy but for the fact that it was in connection with it that Dr. Begg first took the position which he continued to occupy in the sight of friends and foes, as a special advocate of orthodoxy, growing steadily in the estimation of its friends, and more and more provoking the hostility of its foes. The two candidates were, perhaps, equally matched in respect of intellectual qualifications. Dr. Forbes was a very distinguished mathematician, and a man of great mental vigour and sound judgment. Dr. Burns's mind was far inferior to that of his opponent in power of thought and reasoning, but far superior to it in the qualities which are distinctive of literary culture. Neither of them had published much on theological subjects, and there was no doubt as to the soundness of either of their views of Christian doctrine. But Dr. Burns had shown a tendency to lax or "broad" views in regard to the constitution of the Church; and Dr. Forbes was well known to hold views which his opponents had no difficulty in representing as specially strict and "narrow." The controversy was not a vital one, and it came to an end when Dr. Burns was appointed by the Assembly; and I need not say that he was cordially supported by those who had opposed his election, and that he discharged the duties of his office with much ability. But while the controversy was not in itself of great moment, it was not without importance as indicating certain currents of sentiment within the Free Church and outside of it. It is, therefore, worth while to quote the speeches of the mover and seconder of Dr. Forbes in the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale. The report, as given in the *Courant*, is very brief. It is as follows:—

"Mr. THOMAS SMITH proposed Dr. Forbes, Glasgow, and said he quite agreed with the premises laid down by Mr. M'Gregor.[1] The qualifications which that gentleman stated were just those which Dr. Forbes possessed in a more eminent degree than any man whom they could expect to accept the chair. Mr. Smith referred at some length to the qualifications of Dr. Forbes, and said he felt it would be a strong step in the General Assembly to take, and in the Synod to recommend the Assembly to take, to put a young man like Mr. Burns into the place in which Dr. Forbes ought to have been long ago.

"Dr. BEGG seconded the motion. His impression was, that Mr. Burns was not a man of that clear decided judgment necessary for the office; Mr. Burns was not a man that could very shortly and clearly indicate a conclusion in regard to any particular subject on which he was writing. Dr. Begg quoted at considerable length from the writings of Mr. Burns in support of his remarks, and concluded by saying that on the whole he believed Dr. Forbes was the best man for the office, and he cordially seconded his nomination."

This is all that the readers of the *Courant* had presented to them of what was said in opposition to Dr. Burns; and the report was substantially accurate. Surely the readers of that most respectable paper must have been astonished in no small measure when they came upon a long article containing such a statement as this:—"It shows that there are men in the Free Church of a very different stamp from Dr. Begg. Torquemada, or that Cardinal of Lorraine who proposed to Henry II. of France to burn half a dozen heretics 'as a junket to the grandees of Spain,' would have hailed in the Rev. Doctor a kindred spirit!" My old friend, Mr. Marshman of Serampore, used to say that he would back Bengalis, and especially Bengali women, against the world for *galli*.[2] He had not read the *Courant*. In his speech in the General Assembly, when the election came to be made, Dr. Begg referred to such newspaper attacks:—"I must say that I

[1] In proposing Dr. Burns.—T. S.

[2] Abusive language.—T. S.

have a test by which I try the articles of newspapers, however eminent they may be, and that is this: I wish to know, in the first place, what their view is in reference to the Free Church itself, and whether they really wish it well. I sometimes read articles backwards,—that is to say, I read them just in the very opposite sense of the writer, and I do to these articles exactly what Wotherspoon says the Moderates used to do to sermons. In his *Characteristics* he says that the Moderates held it to be an infallible sign of a bad sermon if the people liked it. Supposing that a sermon had passed through the criticism of the whole Presbytery, and that they had fully approved of it, yet, if a young man after that should go and preach it in a congregation, and the people liked it, that was certain evidence that it was a bad sermon; because it was held that the Presbytery were not so uniform in judging right as the people were in judging wrong!" For twenty years after this the name of Dr. Begg was used in the Edinburgh newspapers as a synonym for bigotry and intolerance, while he was all the time aiding in every reasonable effort for the physical and spiritual improvement of his fellow-men. In confirmation of the latter part of this statement, it is noticeable that, in looking over the file of the *Courant*, the next mention that I find of Dr. Begg's name is in a report of a speech on Sabbath observance, of which the closing sentence is—"He believed, also, that much of the mischief was traceable to the very prolonged hours of labour on the other days of the week, especially Saturday, when many were obliged to work till twelve o'clock at night, and were thus ready to take advantage of the Sabbath, not only partially but wholly, as a day of bodily rest." Is this the language of a kindred spirit of Torquemada?

Besides his speech on the election of the professor, from which a short extract has been already given, and that on Union, which I pass over for the present, Dr. Begg made an important one on Education, moving the adoption of the

report given in by the convener of the committee, his friend Mr. Nixon—to whom, I may be allowed to say in passing, the Free Church and the people of Scotland are under immense obligation for his zealous and efficient labours in that capacity. Dr. Begg also gave in, and spoke to, the reports of three committees of which he was convener, viz., that on Popery, that on the right of ministers of the Free Church to vote in the election of members of Parliament, and that on houses for the working classes. Many compliments were paid to him on his exertions in respect of the second and third of these matters; but Mr. Murray Dunlop thought it necessary to repeat his last year's repudiation of that course of procedure in Parliament which Dr. Begg and his committee favoured. "He would not give the least countenance to the policy of Mr. Whalley. For he must say that, next to the skill and talent with which the Popish cause is prosecuted and advanced by its own supporters, next to that, as a means of advancing its interests, is the injudiciousness of some of our advocates." The pain of heart which these attacks—for they were attacks—gave to Dr. Begg was in proportion to the high esteem in which he and all men held him who made them. To what extent they were sympathised with by the Assembly or the people of the Free Church he did not know, and I do not know. But it was becoming obvious that the leaven of indifference with respect to Popery was beginning to work in the minds of our people under the guise of a spirit of liberality, which the agents of the most illiberal body that ever was in the world were fostering by most insidious means, and for most sinister ends. From this time it became clear to Dr. Begg that his anti-Popish exertions must be put forth apart from so cordial sympathy on the part of the Free Church as had hitherto cheered him. There were, of course, multitudes who cordially sympathised with him; but he was painfully conscious that there were some who regarded his zeal as insufficiently tempered with

discretion. Although he had been from the very beginning of his life a fearless controversialist, and often spoke of himself as having been a man of war from his youth, he was never independent of sympathy or indifferent to approbation, and he could ill brook the growing coolness—which he perhaps exaggerated—of some of those with whom he had delighted to take counsel. The first lesson which the champion of truth has to learn is how to comport himself towards his opponents; the second and more difficult one is how to treat friends less ardent in the cause than himself. The fearless champion is not always the successful leader.

A comparatively small matter is significant as indicating the amusing way in which all Dr. Begg's "hobbies" were associated in his mind, so that when he spoke of one of them it seemed natural to himself and his hearers that he should speak of them all. He lived in the Grange, a southern suburb of Edinburgh. Applications were lodged for two "licenses" for the sale of drink in the district. A public meeting of the residents was held for the purpose of remonstrating, and Dr. Begg was one of the speakers.

"Dr. BEGG expressed his cordial approbation of the object, and referred to a return which, with one or two friends, he had succeeded in getting from Parliament, of the number of public-houses in the excise districts of Scotland, with the number of gallons that went into each of them during the years 1861, 1862, and 1863. The Rev. Doctor also referred to the efforts of the working classes to provide themselves with dwelling-houses, and censured the Governors of George Heriot's Hospital for their delay in answering the application of the Co-operative Building Society for the ground at Leith Walk. At present the Governors were receiving £10 per acre for it as garden ground, and the Society had offered double that amount, but had got no answer yet. The matter had been remitted to some committee of oblivion—sent to its grave, as it were, unless the working men resurrectionised it. He hoped the Magistrates would consider

that it was their duty to refuse to increase the number of public-houses in that district."[1]

These two subjects, thus united, came under discussion separately in the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale on the 1st of November. I find that it fell to me to introduce both subjects, as convener of two committees. But I have no doubt—though at this distance of time I have no distinct remembrance of it—that Dr. Begg was one of the most active members of the committees, and that it was on his instigation that the committees brought these matters under consideration of the Synod. The proceedings are briefly reported in the *Courant*, as follows:—

"The Rev. THOMAS SMITH gave in the Report of the Committee on Prevailing Vices, in accordance with which

"Dr. BEGG moved that the Synod transmit the following overture:—'It is humbly overtured by the Free Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale that the General Assembly shall direct its special attention to the present arrangements in regard to the licensing of public-houses, as fraught with the greatest moral and social evil to the community.' Dr. Begg said that for the last three years about 100 additional licenses had been given in this city. Forty new licenses were given in 1860–61, other forty in 1861–62, and other twenty recently. One of these seemed to him to be a case of very great enormity, viz., the licensing of the lodge entering into the Queen's Park at St. Leonard's. The licensing parties were exposed to pressure from interested parties, and there ought to be decisive measures for enabling the public to have their interests protected.

"Dr. J. J. WOOD seconded the adoption of the overture, which was unanimously agreed to.

"Mr. SMITH also gave in the Report of the Committee on Houses for the Working Classes. The committee stated that a good deal of satisfactory progress had been made of late. They recommended that sessions should be urged to lend their influence to the provision of houses for the working classes; and that a respectful memorial be presented to the

[1] That is, in the Grange district. It is far from Leith Walk.—T. S.

Governors of Heriot's Hospital, entreating them to afford all possible facility to those who desire to have portions of their ground for the erection of working men's houses.

"Dr. BEGG moved the adoption of the report. In doing so he stated that Dr. Littlejohn was preparing an interesting document showing the proportional death-rate in different streets and lanes in the city. He had got access to some of the facts, and found that while the average death-rate in healthy districts was about 15 to the 1000—sometimes less, one district in Edinburgh showing only 13 to the 1000—in some parts of the city the rate was as high as 33; in Blackfriars' Wynd it was 37, and in College Wynd 45! The death-rate among children under five years in College Wynd was 123 to 1000, and in Blackfriars' Wynd 192 to 1000, or nearly 20 per cent.—in fact, a regular slaughter-house of human life. It was perfectly plain that they had arrived at a state of things that called loudly for the interposition of Christian men. Of course the pulling down of existing buildings would only aggravate the mischief until new houses were built."

At the same meeting of Synod Dr. Begg introduced another subject, regarding which he and I did not concur. It appears that a cemetery company in Edinburgh had got one of their cemeteries "consecrated" by Bishop Morell. Dr. Begg proposed an overture to the Assembly to "consider whether any and what duty devolves upon the Church in connection with attempts on the part of Scottish Episcopalian bishops to consecrate the public burial-grounds of the country." I moved the non-transmission of the proposed overture, on the ground that the matter in question was between the proprietors of the cemetery and the public, and that the evils which Dr. Begg had pointed out as resulting in England from the consecration of burying-grounds were due to the fact that the law in England attaches certain civil rights to the consecration, but that similar evils cannot result in Scotland from a procedure of which the law takes no cognisance. I have to acknowledge that my motion was not seconded. "The over-

ture," says the report, "was unanimously adopted, Mr. Smith dissenting."

An important meeting of the Presbytery of Edinburgh was held on the 8th of November. It was held specially to consider the subject of Sabbath desecration. Dr. Begg opened the discussion, and referred chiefly to the opening of shops and to the use of cabs on the Lord's Day. With reference to the former subject he said:—"It appeared to him that they must have the question of the Magistrates' right to protect the Fourth Commandment, as well as every other commandment, clearly understood and set before their people. There seemed to be no reason whatever why the Magistrates should enforce all the other commandments which were recognised by the statute law of the country, and which formed part of their civil rights and privileges, as well as their Christian rights, and should make a distinct exception in the matter of the Sabbath."

Ten days later I find Dr. Begg lecturing in Glasgow, "under the auspices of the Glasgow Auxiliary to the London Ladies' Sanitary Association," on Christian duty with regard to the health and homes of the people. "He spoke of the miserable dwellings of the poor as occasioning premature death, and as being a great cause of drunkenness and pauperism."

In November of this year a small controversy ensued between Dr. Begg and an Episcopal minister in Aberdeenshire on the proportion between the criminals belonging to the several denominations. Dr. Begg had been quoted as making some statement on this subject, to the effect that the number of Romanist criminals was greatly out of proportion to the number of Romanists, and that of Episcopal criminals to that of Episcopalians. Mr. Proby attacked this statement, and attempted to show that it was not true with respect to the Episcopalians. I suppose there may be some meaning in his arguments, but I have not been able to discover any.

The correspondence between Dr. Begg and Mr. Proby was sent by the latter to the *Courant*. The subject was discussed in a leader in that paper, which I must give at length, as a specimen of the treatment which Dr. Begg occasionally received.

"Dr. Begg has just come before the world again, in a way highly characteristic of himself, and of the school of Scottish preachers to which he belongs. The activity of these men in political and social agitation, and in attacking the Churches most valued by the educated classes of the country, is apt to be unduly wondered at by people who do not consider the whole circumstances. Dr. Begg and his friends, we must remember, never discharge any of those duties which in the more civilised countries of Europe are reckoned the most honourable and onerous on which the clergy can be employed. They are always talking of the Bible—by which they mean the Authorised Version. But they never produce anything in theology or scholarship. They never edit the Septuagint or the Greek Testament. They never make a contribution to ecclesiastical history or sacred philology. They never defend the faith against the sceptics of England, or France, or Germany. The result is, that they have abundant leisure to employ in teaching the lairds their social duties, and in criticising the conduct of those Churches for which the lairds have such a perverse preference. On the particular occasion which has suggested these remarks, Dr. Begg,—giving the Establishment a little breathing-time,—took the Episcopal Church of Scotland in hand, and pretended to lay down the general principle that it was fertile beyond example in the production of criminals. There are some poor creatures in the country who take everything the Doctor says on trust. So, when a clergyman of the Church in question, Mr. Proby, happened to be lecturing lately, he was suddenly assailed by a wretched Stonehaven print, and told that 'the Scottish Episcopal Church has nearly as many criminals in jail as the Free, United Presbyterian, and Independent Churches together.' The statement, it turned out, was made on Dr. Begg's authority, which, however, though good enough for a Stonehaven scribbler, could hardly be expected to satisfy men of better position. The Doctor himself was therefore

called upon to explain, and the result has already appeared in our columns. In the first place, the Stonehaven man was assuming as true of 1864 what even Dr. Begg only pretended to be true of 1862. But, in the next place, Dr. Begg had taken care to suppress one important fact, and to ignore another, about the return of 1862. That return comprised 294 'Protestant Dissenters,' whose non-classification he never hinted at or inquired into. And he ignored the obvious fact that under the head of 'Episcopalians' all kinds of waifs and strays from England and Ireland must naturally be allowed for. When shown in what respects he was wrong, and told that by the return of 1st January 1864 there were only 217 Episcopalian prisoners to 433 of the Free, United Presbyterian, and Congregational bodies, Dr. Begg became impudent and evasive. He shirked the real difficulty presented to him, and rode off on the joke that his exposure had probably diminished the amount of Episcopalian crime. Of course, he did not apologise. These men never do. They have neither the heart nor the good breeding which in the case of persons of a higher class sometimes supplies the want of heart.

"There are one or two morals which we must now take the liberty of drawing from this little history. The first is, that it is a most dangerous thing for clergymen of any Church to base arguments on criminal returns of the kind with which we have been dealing. What does the inference that Dr. Begg wanted to draw from his cooked facts amount to? Neither more nor less than this,—that there is something in the Prayer-Book which is likely to make a man steal spoons, and that Mr. Sykes will be more apt than his neighbours to break into a dwelling-house because his parson believes in apostolical succession. This is surely the high-water mark even of Scotch bigotry. For our part, we don't believe that the 300 Free Church prisoners of the last return were brought into bad courses by their Non-Intrusionism, or that they came of families more neglected by their pastors than the average run of families in other Churches. In the classification of criminals, too, Established Churches—and so, of course, Churches whose proper members may be confounded with those of any Establishment—are sure to fare worst. The stronghold of Dissent is in the tolerably well-to-do lower middle class, and the very poor are left to

Establishments, because it is worth nobody else's while to claim or annex them. In short, for polemical purposes, criminal returns are next to valueless;—it is so impossible to determine how much or how little the nominal religion of a criminal has to do with his crime. Were the opposite principle admitted, a Mahometan might impeach Christianity itself on the ground of the vast mass of prisoners of all denominations undergoing punishment in these islands. Yet we know that these prisoners have not offended *because* they are Christians, and a little reflection might teach Dr. Begg that the same thing is true of such Episcopalians as happen to be in jail also. Our next moral is a staler one. It is, that nothing so much retards the civilisation of Scotland as the barbarous narrowness of which this D.D.'s ecclesiastical policy is a symptom. Like the miner in Leech's picture, he never sees a Christian of another Church without wishing to ''eave 'alf a brick at him,' and the impulse descends through gradations of ignorance to village editors and village shrews. 'Liberalism,' such as we have it here, can do nothing against this spirit, for it only opposes a comic Begg to the great serious one, and forms a camp which is hostile to what grain of good does exist in the fanatical severity of the latter. Time, and literature, and the influence of travel and other nations on the Scotch, are the only curative agents to be trusted in. Meanwhile, Dr. Begg and his friends may rest assured that their activity in works of spitefulness is well known to be due not only to their want of charity, but to their want of learning. Such base humours would never have risen in the bodies of men accustomed to bathe in the healthful waters of the Eurotas."

I am glad that I have not occasion to say much on this "curative agency" for the barbarism of Scotland. But I must say a little. It is quite true that Dr. Begg never "edited the Septuagint or the Greek Testament," a crime in which, so far as I know, he shares with all the Scottish, and certainly with 999 out of every 1000 English, Episcopal ministers of the present and of preceding generations. Dr. Begg never professed to be a particularly learned man, and no one of his friends ever believed or said that he was; but

it so happens that the Scottish Episcopal clergy have contributed extremely little to theological, historical, or apologetic literature. With the exception of the late Bishop Cotterill, no one of them in the present generation has contributed anything at all.[1] Of course I do not blame them for this. The Scottish Episcopal clergy are a thoroughly respectable body of men, for whom as a body I have most sincere respect, while for those of them whom I happen to know personally I have more than mere respect. I am sure that these sentiments were also Dr. Begg's. The Scottish Episcopal clergy are not to be held responsible for the singularly injudicious action of their champion. The very heinous charge which the editor of the *Courant* brings against Dr. Begg of "cooking facts" is not only unsupported, but is disproved, by his own witnesses. Neither Mr. Proby nor his Civil Service correspondent charges Dr. Begg with making an unfair use of the data which he possessed. If facts were "cooked," it was not by him, but by the official compilers of the returns. In the absence of information, which the *Courant* ought to have furnished, I take upon me to assert that Dr. Begg did not use these statistics for polemic ends, and that he never either stated or insinuated that Episcopal criminals were criminal because of the teaching of their Church or because of the negligence of their clergy.

[1] I do not mean to include under this statement English clergymen who have resided in Scotland without any official connection with the Scottish Episcopal Church, such as the late Archdeacon Williams and Professor Kelland, and Dr. Payne Smith, the present Dean of Canterbury.—T.S.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MODERATORSHIP OF ASSEMBLY—SERIOUS RAILWAY ACCIDENT—MODERATORSHIP.

EACH General Assembly of the Free Church elects its own Moderator. But as various preparations require to be made —mental and sartorial—and as it would be very inconvenient for a man to be put into the chair without warning, it has become the unvaried custom to hold a meeting of ministers and elders at the close of the November Commission, when an agreement is come to as to the man that is to be proposed. This of course leaves intact the right of any member of the Assembly to propose any other man. But this right has never been exercised, and it would be only in a very extreme case that its exercise would meet with approbation or acceptance. A similar meeting is held at the close of the March Commission, when the acceptance or non-acceptance of the nominee is announced; and in the event of his non-acceptance, another is named.

At the meeting in November 1864, Dr. James Buchanan and Dr. James Begg were proposed for the Moderatorship in 1865; but Dr. Begg gracefully declined to be put in nomination along with his old friend, under whose auspices, it will be remembered, he had begun his ministry at North Leith. Dr. Buchanan was accordingly nominated with cordial unanimity. But at the meeting in March it was intimated that the state of Dr. Buchanan's health necessitated his declining the honour of the Moderatorship, and Dr. Begg was again proposed, and unanimously accepted, as the nominee of the

meeting. It is usual for witty newspaper writers to perpetrate sneers at the "little brief authority" and the temperory dignity of the Moderators of our General Assemblies—sneers which, as Mr. Disraeli said of Sir Robert Peel's Horatian quotations, must be good, as they have again and again received the approbation of—their readers. It is, of course, quite possible that a Moderator may not always wear his honours meekly, and that one may occasionally put undue value on the mere millinery of the antique costume, or upon the social prominence which are considered appropriate to the office. But I confess that I should have difficulty in refraining from the imputation of a defect of self-knowledge, or, alternatively, a defect of sincerity, to the Presbyterian minister who should profess to receive otherwise than with very intense gratification the highest honour to which any Presbyterian minister can aspire, an honour which can be conferred on very few of them. Certainly Dr. Begg was not the man to make any such disclaimer, or to adopt aught of the *Nolo episcopari* phraseology. He undervalued neither the honour nor the onerousness of the office which he was to be called to undertake. Two things were necessary in preparation for it. No man could have lived so laborious a life as he had led without physical effects, and no small measure of bodily strength is essential to the endurance of the strain of the Moderatorship. Then it was natural that one who had spoken so much of religious and social questions should, in his addresses to the Assembly, make definite and authoritative statements on such subjects. With the twofold object, then, of recruiting his strength by comparative rest, and of viewing with his own eyes the condition of reformed and unreformed countries in respect of social and domestic manners and customs, he resolved to spend a portion of the time between his nomination to the Moderator's chair and his occupancy of it in a Continental tour. Accordingly, in the records of the Newington Deacons' Court, under

date "7th March 1865," I find the following paragraph:—"Mr. Badenoch having intimated that Dr. Begg, by order of his medical adviser, had been under the necessity of leaving Edinburgh for a time for a milder climate, the Court desire to express their sympathy with their beloved pastor, and hope that under Providence the means employed may be blessed for his speedy recovery. The Rev. Mr. Kidd having been appointed to occupy the pulpit during his absence, the Court resolved to express their satisfaction with the temporary supply provided."

His Continental tour, however, was not to be. The following short paragraph I find in the *Daily Review* of March 27:—

"ACCIDENT TO DR. BEGG.—Our readers will learn with regret that in the course of last week an accident occurred on one of the English railways leading into London, by which several passengers, including the Rev. Dr. Begg of Edinburgh, were injured. The Rev. Doctor was, at the time of the accident, on his way to Geneva to spend a few weeks there for the benefit of his health, which has of late been rather delicate. He sustained a severe wound on one of his legs, above the knee, and though progressing favourably, he has for several days been confined to bed in London, and is in consequence prevented at present from prosecuting his journey."

The accident was, in fact, much more serious than this notice would seem to indicate. I do not altogether understand how it befell, although I often heard him describe it. It was somewhat in this wise. An axle of the carriage broke, and one portion of it came through the floor of the compartment in which Dr. Begg was. The carriage was thrown off the rails, the wheel still revolving as it jumped from sleeper to sleeper, and the axle tearing the flesh off Dr. Begg's thigh. The train proceeded in this way for a mile or more before it could be stopped. This would not occupy more than three or four minutes, but to the sufferer it seemed

a very much longer time. It was found that no bones were broken, but the flesh was torn in a dreadful manner. A surgeon who was in the train was able to arrest the bleeding, and Dr. Begg was removed to a hotel, where he remained under treatment for several weeks.

This accident very materially modified Dr. Begg's subsequent life. Although he seemed ere long to recover, his intimate friends often remarked that physically he was no longer "the man he once was." For a long time he was unable to take his wonted exercise, and from this time he almost entirely discontinued his practice of walking. This produced a degree of heaviness, which never, indeed, amounted to corpulence, but which was in marked contrast with his former elasticity. It told also on the activity of his mind in the ordinary intercourse of life. In his preaching and his speechmaking there was no off-falling. But it required more to rouse him than had sufficed before. Rather, up till this time, he required no rousing. He seemed to be always "up to the mark," ready at any moment to put forth all his powers. Of course this change might have been produced by the advance of years; but, in point of fact, its production was coincident with the accident, and his friends imputed it to this as its cause. For the reason which I have just stated, it was only his friends, and indeed only the most intimate of them, that noticed it at all.

If the railway accident left permanent evil physical effects, I have no doubt that it left good spiritual effects—far more good than the physical were evil, and far more enduring, even eternal. He had been brought face to face with death, more closely than ever before, or, indeed, than ever after until the final encounter. Then he had a long period of enforced rest in the midst of a too laborious life, an opportunity for introspection and meditation in the midst of a life which was to a large extent spent in outward action. With the reticence which is more or less characteristic of our

countrymen, and which was a very prominent feature in his character, he never spoke much of his spiritual exercises; but he often referred to those which he went through at this time; and I remember that once I heard him quote regarding them the text: "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day; for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." He makes a brief allusion to the subject in a business note to his friend Dr. Wylie, the envelope bearing date "May 13, '65."

"MATLOCK, *Friday.*

"MY DEAR DR. WYLIE,—Many thanks for your kind letter. Amidst many trials I have had great experience of the Lord's goodness; and I earnestly pray that all may be sanctified, and that I may be graciously fitted for every duty.

"The matter to which you refer is one in which I feel the deepest interest, and have always been anxious to have it settled. My illness has prevented me of late from attending much to business. But as the affairs of the Institute are now getting into a settled state, I shall be most anxious to come to some understanding as soon after the Assembly is over as possible. I hope there may be no difficulty in this.—With kindest regards, my dear Dr. Wylie, yours ever,

"JAMES BEGG."

The Assembly met on the 18th of May. It is the unvarying custom that the retiring Moderator proposes as his successor the man who has been selected, as has been explained, at the meeting in November or March. The Assembly having been constituted,

"Principal FAIRBAIRN then said—Reverend Fathers and Brethren, it now only remains for me, in a few words, to take formal leave of this chair, to which the kindness of the last General Assembly raised me, and the prospective occupancy of which filled me with some concern. Positions of honour, like offices of trust, sometimes become less irksome in the reality than they appeared beforehand to the imagination; and having received so much consideration and forbearance

during my possession of the chair—(applause)—I can now sincerely associate with it my best, agreeable, and pleasant remembrances. (Applause.) If anything occurred to awaken other feelings in my mind I have forgotten it, and I fondly hope that whatever may have appeared out of place in my own bearing or procedure has, on your part, been consigned to a similar oblivion. As you all know, I am more at home in the comparatively retired, though by no means inactive, scenes of the study and the class-room than in the stir and excitement, and occasional collisions, of public assemblies. My venerable and esteemed predecessor also, Mr. M'Leod, accustomed to dwell remote from the busy thoroughfares of the world, and to be listened to and loved as a father by an attached people, represented the quieter and more composed aspect of Presbyterian authority and rule. It cannot but seem fitting now that you should have a representative of its more active and enterprising side—(applause)—on which account, as well as in compliance with an established usage of our Church, I have much pleasure in proposing to your acceptance the Rev. Dr. James Begg—(loud applause)—one who, from an early period in his ministerial life, has taken an active part in the public affairs of the Church, and is distinguished for his practical sense and business habits. (Applause.) He has held the convenership of not a few committees of the Church, and by his counsel and sagacity has materially contributed to the successful management of others. In social economies and the moral well-being of the people he has long taken a deep interest; and even those who may sometimes have felt unable to concur in the specific measures proposed or supported by him, cannot but have admired the zeal and warmth of his advocacy. (Applause.) His talents as a public speaker are familiarly known to nearly all here; and if skill and power in debate, coolness of temper, promptitude of decision, readiness of thought and utterance—if these form important qualifications in one who is fitted either to guide or to preside over the deliberations of a public assembly, there are not many among us who will be allowed to possess them in a more eminent degree than Dr. Begg. (Applause.) I venture to hope, therefore, that he will receive a unanimous and hearty welcome to the chair of this House. (Loud applause.)

"The EARL OF DALHOUSIE said—Moderator, I have very great pleasure in seconding the motion you have just made. But before doing so I must take leave to express to you the regret we all feel that we require, according to our usual forms, to part with one who has added dignity to the chair of the Assembly, and of whom I am quite certain it may be said that the whole Assembly has benefited to a very large extent during the period he has occupied the chair. Sir, in proceeding to elect one whom you designate as a more active member of the Church, I think that we proceed to confer the highest honour that this Assembly has in its power to confer, on one who is fully worthy of it. (Applause.) There are none whom I now address who are not well aware of the independent spirit in which Dr. Begg has ever taken part in the debates of the Assembly of this Church—(applause)—and it is a proof that those who have somewhat, and sometimes, differed from him on subjects in debate can appreciate that independence by cordially conjoining to raise him to the chair of the Assembly. (Applause.) There are other reasons at this season, and at this time, which make me rejoice that it is the pleasure of the Assembly to confer this honour on such a man as Dr. Begg. Dr. Begg is not only remarkable in this Church for that independent spirit in its debates which I have stated, but it has been his lot to occupy a position on an important subject—I mean the resistance to Popery—(applause)—which makes me at the present time rejoice to see him marked with the approbation of the Free Church. (Applause.) I do not mean to say that in his opinion and his antipathy to Popery Dr. Begg differs at all from the rest of his brethren in the Church—(Hear, hear)—but it has been his lot to hold a more prominent place in the eyes of the public in his resistance to it. He has been blamed for so doing by those whose censure he can afford to make light of—(Hear, and applause); but he has been praised for so doing by those whose praise must be his best reward. When we look abroad over these islands, when we turn our face across the sea, we see how necessary it is to mark our determination to resist the progress of Popish doctrine and Popish opinions. (Hear, hear.) I am sorry to say that we see the Church of England holding a dangerous flirtation with these opinions—(applause)—and that recent circumstances have

brought under the public eye the fact that in our Protestant —our so-called Protestant—churches the wretched device of the Confessional is again rearing itself. (Applause.) Anything more degrading to liberal-minded men, anything more detrimental to the virtue and harmony of society, never was invented by Satan himself than the system of the Confessional, which, it now appears, is again rearing its head in our Protestant churches. (Applause.) When we look at home, on this side of the Tweed, and when we see our old true-blue Presbyterianism flirting with that section of the Church of which we all know very well we have no pleasant memories—(Hear, hear, and laughter)—I think it is necessary, and I am happy that the event has occurred, that we should place in our chair at this Assembly one so distinguished for the strictness of his Presbyterian sentiments as is Dr. Begg. (Hear, hear, and applause.) I have therefore the greatest pleasure in seconding his nomination. The only regret I feel is, that I am given to understand that the state of his health is such that he may not be able to enter into all the labours of this Assembly with that strength of body which ought to keep pace with his spirit of mind.

"The motion having been unanimously carried, Dr. Begg was introduced to the House by Dr. Clason, Lord Dalhousie, and Dr. Candlish, and amid great applause, he was welcomed to the chair by Principal Fairbairn, who said—'Dr. Begg, I have the happiness to announce to you that you have been unanimously elected to the office of Moderator of this Assembly. I congratulate you on the appointment, and have only to wish that your possession of the chair may be attended with comfort to yourself, as I have no doubt it will be with satisfaction to the House.' (Loud applause.)"

I well remember the sensation that was produced when Dr. Begg entered the House, still very partially recovered from the effect of his recent accident, and the Court-dress making very conspicuous the abundant bandaging of the injured limb. He was so far recovered that his intimate friends could joke with him — outside the Assembly, of course—on the grotesqueness of his appearance, caused by

what had been to them a matter of very grave anxiety. I need not say that he took such banter with the most genial goodnature. I have heard also that some of the young members of the Assembly irreverently deemed his figure—usually so grand and perfectly proportioned—a fit subject for the exercise of their pictorial powers!

Although the position of the Moderator of the General Assembly is, in the main, correspondent to that of the Speaker in the House of Commons, inasmuch as he alone of all the members cannot speak or vote, or indicate any preference for one or other of any proposals that may be made,—yet in one particular his office bears a certain resemblance to that of the Prime Minister, or rather to that of the Cabinet as a unit; for he opens and closes the proceedings with addresses, which may be regarded as in some degree analogous to the Queen's speech at the opening and the dissolution of Parliament. Very naturally the Moderatorial addresses, for many years after the Disruption, were, to a considerable extent, of an apologetic character. It was necessary to vindicate the position of the Free Church, and to account for the existence of her General Assembly. Thus every successive Moderator reverted to the Disruption, showed its necessity, or indicated the good results which had flowed from it. This, perhaps, was done too frequently; so that I remember a witty friend of mine suggested that an Act should be passed prohibiting the utterance of the word *Disruption* by any Moderator. But such a vindication as I have referred to was altogether appropriate while the Free Church was still in the first quarter of a century of separate existence. Dr. Begg's address was of this character; and I do not know that there is anywhere to be found so complete a vindication, in so small compass, of a movement which was unquestionably the most important in its bearings on the interests of the Church of Christ, of any in our time. It is grave and solemn, the utterance of a man fully alive to the importance of his theme,

and to the responsibilities of the position which he was called to occupy. Of course it was impossible to show that the Free Church was in the right, without showing that the Established Church was in the wrong; and this could not be done without giving offence to the supporters of the latter. Sure I am, however, that very few of these supporters had a particle of sympathy with an attack which was made on Dr. Begg by an Edinburgh newspaper. I regret that it is necessary—but it seems to be so—to reproduce two or three paragraphs of this article:—

"Begg has his uses in the world, and was created to serve a profitable purpose, just as the tiger and the wolf have their valuable functions to fulfil in the economy of nature. Begg's mission is to frighten away respectable and moderate people from the Free Church, and he promises to be very successful in accomplishing the object of his existence. The Liberals, whom Mr. Bright has terrified into reflection, are now dividing themselves into two sections, one of which will unite itself to the Conservatives, and the other to the Radicals. So, in the case of the Free Church, Begg will allure many to follow him to join the U.P.s; and on the other, he will drive many to join the Establishment. Begg will divide the sheep from the goats, and as performing this function with vigour, he must be pronounced to be a really useful member of society.

"It is not every day that one meets with so violent, and therefore so useful, an oration as Begg's of Thursday. Begg denounces in the most unmeasured terms, as diabolical and all the rest of it, the series of compromises proposed before 1843, and of which he was one of the chief framers and the noisiest advocates. Really, Begg ought to be a little more charitable to those who differ from him now, considering that he admits himself to have been in the wrong before 1843, and that he denounces to-day, as diabolic and satanic, arrangements which he then protested were all that was necessary to restore peace to the Church. Dr. Begg went the length on Thursday of comparing those who differed with him on some trumpery point of patronage to the Jews who crucified the Founder of our religion. Such deplorable exaggeration de-

feats its own object, and before many years have elapsed we hope to welcome back into the old fold many who have been alienated by his wicked violence. Let Begg & Co. join their congenial associates of the U.P.s, and let the moderate and sensible men of the Free Church return to the old Establishment. In this arrangement will be found, we believe, the settlement, both of the negotiations which occupy, and of the controversies which divide, the various sections of the great Presbyterian communion."[1]

I am sure that this impertinent piece of abuse caused deep sorrow to many good and intelligent members of the Established Church. I could not, without reproducing Dr. Begg's address in its entirety, prove that there is not a sentence or an expression in it that gives the slightest reason for this virulent tirade. The account which Hamlet gives of his mother's second marriage seems to be strictly applicable to its publication. It was a matter of "thrift." The article must have been put into type before the delivery of the address. The compositors would have to be paid for "setting it up," and it would have been a waste of money to "take it down." If the Moderator of the Free Assembly did not describe the Veto Law and the Duke of Argyle's Bill as "diabolical-and-all-the-rest-of-it" compromises, but as concessions whose rejection necessitated disruption,—if he never, from beginning to end of his address, hinted at the most distant resemblance between Judas and the "forty,"—why, the fault was his, and the compositor must not be made to suffer for it.

The matter was referred to on the last evening of the Assembly. The somewhat unusual course was taken of requesting the Moderator to give his opening address to the Assembly for publication. In moving to that effect—

"Lord DALHOUSIE said—Notice of a motion was given by a reverend brother who has been obliged to leave us to-night in order to reach home. I shall now make the motion of which he gave notice. It was to the effect, that 'the

[1] *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, Saturday, May 20, 1865.

address delivered by our venerable Moderator at the time when he first occupied the chair should be printed and circulated through the Church.' I can most cordially concur in that motion, with one very trifling exception. You will all, brethren, recollect the deep impression that address made upon all who heard it, and it appears to me to be singularly apposite to the period in which we live. . . . There was one sentence, and one only, that grated somewhat upon my ear. Not that I attributed to the venerable Moderator any desire to say anything which he could not conscientiously reconcile to himself; but it was a sentence which referred, if you recollect it—I trust it has passed from the memories of most—it referred to the conduct of the Jews and the crucifixion of our Saviour, and drew a parallel which some weak brethren —very weak brethren indeed—made the mistake of carrying too far, and which some very hostile people have not been ashamed to take hold of and pervert. I could wish that sentence had not been there, because I am quite certain it never was, or could have been, in the mind of our Moderator to charge the members of the Established Church with feelings at all in sympathy with the feelings which inspired the Jews when they said in mockery to our Saviour, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' But it appears to me it was intended to draw a contrast between real and sham allegiance to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as Head of the Church; and to point out that whilst the members of the Established Church, conscientiously, no doubt, believed that they look upon the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as Head of the Church, yet that their conduct was inconsistent with that profession, inasmuch as they were guided in spiritual matters by legal authority and Parliamentary enactment. I think the sentence meant nothing more than that, and meaning nothing more than that, I can most cordially go along with it. I trust our venerable Moderator will agree, for the sake of relieving the minds of weaker brethren, and for the sake of preventing wilful misrepresentation, to give an explanation, in a note appended to the sentence, of the real meaning and bearing of it. With such a suggestion, I have the greatest pleasure in moving, 'that this address be printed at the expense of the Church, and that it be sent down to Presbyteries for the information of sons of the Church.'

"The MODERATOR—I beg to state that the address is entirely at the service of the Church, to do with it as they please. I beg further to say that Lord Dalhousie has given the correct interpretation of this very obnoxious sentence to certain individuals.' The obnoxiousness of it, however, with many, lies, I suspect, very much in its truth. I shall be most happy to append to the sentence an explanatory note. There is not a word about the Crucifixion; the sentence is most carefully limited and restricted to what Lord Dalhousie has just pointed out, namely, the contrast between professed allegiance and real loyal submission."

The terrible sentence was the following:—"The Jews might therefore as well have claimed to be loyal to Christ when they arrayed Him in a scarlet robe, and put a reed in His hand and a crown of thorns on His head, crying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' at the very time when their conduct as well as their words said, 'We have no king but Cæsar,' as our modern Churchmen are entitled to claim that they are loyal to Him, when in every case of debate they regulate their conduct by Acts of Parliament, not by the Acts of the Apostles." To this sentence Dr. Begg appended the following note when the address was published:—"This sentence has been perverted by one of our newspapers, which affirmed that I had 'exhibited a parallel between the members of the Established Church and the Jews aiding the Crucifixion.' It is scarcely necessary to say that there is not one word about the 'Crucifixion' in the sentence. It was intended to convey, and, fairly interpreted, only does convey, an illustration of the contrast between professed loyalty and true submission to the kingly authority of Christ." I must say that I think both Lord Dalhousie and Dr. Begg made far too much of the *Courant* in noticing at all its malevolent attack. No Free Churchman could possibly say less than Dr. Begg said as to the practical denial of the Headship of Christ by the Established Church at the Disruption. If they did not practically deny it, the Free Church had no *raison d'être;* and it would be too

much to demand of a Free Churchman that he should vindicate his Church from the charge of causeless schism. That a great proportion of those who abode by the Establishment were conscientious, no Free Churchman ever denied. That they were mistaken, every Free Churchman was bound to maintain.

The Moderator's closing address was solemn and weighty. It referred mainly to the duty of standing upon the solid ground of God's Word, and taking that Word as our only rule in regard to all matters, not of doctrine only, but also of government and worship. I have often read it, and ever with enhanced admiration. I have just read it now. My regret that my space does not admit of my reproducing it is only lessened by the consideration that it is easily accessible to my readers. I very cordially commend it to their perusal. It contains what may be regarded as an epitome of its author's life-long teaching on the subjects which were ever nearest his heart, the glory of God and the well-being of man in time and eternity. I must, however, enliven my page by the quotation of the following characterestic anecdote, the rather as it was one which Dr. Begg often told with great gusto, and I do not remember that he has introduced it into his *Autobiography*:—"A worthy minister in those days asked a neighbour of this class to preach one of his Fast-Day sermons. He preached a well-composed piece of negative theology—something that he reckoned very philosophical, without any mixture of controversial doctrine, although, as one said, they could be 'fierce for moderation' when they had an object in view. Next day the minister met an old village patriarch, and asked him how he liked the sermon. 'Oh, dinna bring him here ony mair,' was the answer; 'he's very far back in his information; he doesna ken that Adam's fa'en yet.'" An Iliad this in a nutshell!

It is part of the Moderator's duty, as mouthpiece of the Assembly, to state its mind to deputies from other Churches,

and others to whom it may be the pleasure of the Assembly to convey thanks. This duty Dr. Begg discharged, not in a commonplace and perfunctory way, but by suggesting matters worthy of their earnest consideration in the circumstances in which they were placed.

We have not in Scotland any word corresponding to the Lady-Mayoress of our Southern neighbours. I must, therefore, coin the term when I state that the Lady-Moderatress was precluded from taking any part in the dispensation of the hospitalities which are regarded as an inseparable adjunct of the Moderatorial office.[1] There were various whisperings of a proposal to present her with a silver cradle, but I do not think that it was carried into effect. The little one "born in the purple," to whom the pet-name of "little Mody" was naturally given, lived only long enough to become as an angel in the house.[2] I very well remember the deep and long-continued dejection which his removal produced on his father. It was at a time when he was overwhelmed with public business and controversy; but the strong and apparently ruthless champion of the right was broken as the weakest woman by the death-bed of his winsome boy. Large eyes shed large tears.

Dr. Begg's impressions of the proceedings of the Assembly over which he presided are given in a speech which he delivered on the day after its close, at a "Jubilee dinner to the Rev. Dr. Clason." In replying to the toast of his health as Moderator of the Assembly, he said—

". . . In regard to the late General Assembly—of which, in a sense, he was a mere spectator, though a very deeply interested spectator—he thought that they must all rejoice at the unabated energy of the Church. There were many things

[1] "At Newington Free Church Manse, on the 20th inst., Mrs. Begg, of a son" (*Daily Review, 24th May* 1865).—T. S.

[2] This is the child represented in the photograph in front of this volume.—T. S.

remarkable in that Assembly. The increase towards the support of their ministers to the extent of £6 added to the equal dividend was certainly remarkable, as indicating a growing liberality on the part of people at home. The deputies from France, Italy, and Hungary who addressed the Assembly afforded a spectacle that was quite unknown in olden times; and the interesting reports in regard to all their missionary enterprises indicated an increase of vigour that must have been peculiarly gratifying to all the friends of the Church. He hoped that, by the Divine blessing, it might lead to the establishment of the Missionary Institute proposed by Dr. Duff[1]—an institute which, if once established, would, he trusted, render the recent Assembly memorable in the history of the Church."

It may be noted in passing, with a view to subsequent reference, that it was into this Assembly that a subject was introduced which was matter of much discussion in the following years—the subject of hymn-singing in public worship. Of course Dr. Begg was precluded from taking part in the discussion this year; but in his closing address he indicated unmistakably the attitude which he should assume and maintain when his hands should be untied.

The fatigue of the Assembly told far more severely on Dr. Begg in his debilitated condition than he had anticipated,—more, indeed, than he realised at the time. But while he was able to hold out till the work was done, the strain told on him all the more when it was over. During the summer he was able for little work; and at the end of October he applied to the Presbytery for three months' leave of absence, which was, of course, granted, with a very cordial expression of the sympathy of his brethren.

[1] This hope, I grieve to say, has not as yet been realised.—T. S.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

WORKING MEN'S HOUSES—"FORM OF PROCESS"—TOTAL ABSTINENCE—HYMNS—CONVERSION OF THE JEWS —CITY IMPROVEMENTS—SUPPLY OF MINISTERS.

DR. BEGG spent the time of his enforced cessation from his ordinary work partly in visits to various health-resorts (especially his favourite Bridge of Allan), and partly in gathering up fragments of his previous literary works. Thus I find him dating the preface of a book on working men's houses[1] on the 1st of January 1866. The first sentence of this preface is as follows:—"A period of enforced leisure occurring amidst a somewhat busy life, in the holy providence of God,—an improved tone of public opinion on the subject referred to, with some very favourable circumstances in the present state of Edinburgh,—a wish to reply comprehensively to questions which the author is often called upon by letter to answer in detail, and which he can only answer imperfectly; and, above all, a strong desire to promote a cause with which he believes all the best interests of the people and the country to be inseparably bound up, will sufficiently account for the appearance of the present volume." The book may be regarded as a handbook on one branch of the subject, the importance to the working man of becoming his own landlord, and the plan by which this can best be effected; while it points out the obstacles that lie in the way, such as the difficulty of procuring suitable sites, the expense of transfer and titles, and, most of all, the improvidence of the people

[1] "Happy Homes for Working Men, and How to Get Them." By James Begg, D.D. London: Cassell, Petter, & Galpin, 1866.—T. S.

and the drinking and smoking habits of many of them. The plan is by means of co-operation, and that in two directions, the co-operation of builders for the erection of houses, and the co-operation of working men for the purchase of them when they are erected. A great portion of the book is occupied with a detail of the institution and operations of the "Edinburgh Co-Operative Building Company (Limited)." The following extract will make the method "plain to the meanest capacity":—

"... It was resolved that the houses," erected by the Co-Operative Building Company, "shall be sold at £130.

"It may be explained that the houses are of two storeys each; but, inasmuch as the ground-floor enters from one side, and the upper storey from the other,[1] each house is self-contained. Each house has two rooms and a kitchen, with every necessary convenience. They are made of the best materials, and are thoroughly comfortable and substantial. In front of each there is a small garden. . . .

"The Property Investment Companies were willing to advance upon each £125, so that if a man had £5 in the Savings Bank to start with, he could at once become the owner of a house. It was found that the annual outlay to redeem this in fourteen years was about £13, or about £2 a year more than the annual rent of such houses; so that for an outlay of £28—£2 a year for fourteen years—a house worth £130 is obtained."

Coming upon this passage without any previous knowledge of the subject, I was certainly startled, as many of my readers will be, with the statement that £28 can be made to do the work of £130. I therefore set about examining it with such knowledge of figures as I possess, and I shall give my readers the benefit of the examination. First of all, the statement is not strictly accurate, as it is not £28 but £33 that does the work of £130; but that is a comparatively small error. Then I find that the annual payment, in excess of the rent, is materially understated. Besides the £13 to

[1] By an "outside stair."—T. S.

be paid in liquidation of the loan, the purchaser of the house would have to pay feu-duty and imperial and municipal taxes, from which, as tenant, he would have been free. Besides this he would have to keep the house in repair; but this, of course, would not cost much for a considerable time in the case of a newly-built house. The only rate of feu-duty mentioned in the book is £30 an acre; and assuming this to be the average rate, and considering that each house has a small garden in front of it, I suppose that each house will occupy a thirtieth part of an acre, and its proprietor will pay a feu-duty of £1. I do not think that landlord's taxes and repairs can be estimated at less than another pound. If these suppositions be nearly correct, then it is not £2 a year for fourteen years that does the work of £130, but £5 paid down, £2 a year for fourteen years, and £2 a year in perpetuity; and, thus corrected, the statement is considerably less startling than as made by Dr. Begg.

By a simple computation, which any one can verify, I found that the liquidation of a debt of £125 by annual payments of £13 for fourteen years meant simply the gradual payment of the debt, and the payment of 5 per cent. of interest on the portion left unpaid.[1] From the account given in the volume of one of the Property Investment Companies, it appears that they credit their shareholders with £25 in consideration of the payment of a shilling per fortnight, or £1, 6s. per annum, for about fourteen years; and this also is virtually giving them 5 per cent. for their payments. Now it is evident that the paying 5 per cent. for money and investing it at 5 per cent. would leave nothing for expense of management and possible losses, and bank-

[1] Thus the interest for the first year is £6, 5s. Therefore £6, 15s. goes towards the liquidation of the debt, reducing it to £118, 5s. The interest of this sum at 5 per cent. is £5, 18s. 3d., so that a payment of £13 gives £7, 1s. 9d. to the payment of the debt, bringing it down to £111, 3s. 3d. If the non-mathematical reader will continue this computation for fourteen years, he will find that the account is just square.—T. S.

ruptcy would be the certain result; but then they raise in this way only a very small portion of the money which they invest. From their advertisements it appears that they are really banking companies. As their operations are conducted on a humbler scale, they are able to give depositors very materially higher interest than the larger banks do, and still to invest their deposits at 5 per cent. Suppose such a company has £1000 contributed by shareholders and £9000 deposited, and can invest the whole £10,000 on good security at 5 per cent., it can give 5 per cent. to the shareholders and 4 per cent. to the depositors, and have £90 for working expenses.

At first sight it would appear that an advance of £125 on a house worth £130 left too small a margin for deterioration and the fluctuation of the market; but I presume that the Society would hold a bond over the house during the whole period of fourteen years, and the selling price of the house could scarcely by possibility be less at any time than the amount still due upon it. Altogether, then, it seems to me that there is no reason, apart from dishonesty or mismanagement, why such a scheme should fail.

For two reasons I have thought it well to go at some length into an examination of this matter. The first is, that it occupied a very great part of Dr. Begg's thought and life. The second, that it is capable of almost indefinite extension in town and country, and it is possible that this notice of it may contribute to its extension.

From the first section it appears that Dr. Begg had the high honour conferred on him by the Society of laying the foundation-stones of their first two blocks of houses, "Reid Terrace" and "Hugh Miller Place." At a later time another Society conferred on him the still higher honour of calling by his name a tenement of houses at Abbeyhill. This honour was higher than the other, inasmuch as it is held in perpetual remembrance, as the Edinburgh Directory,

in all time coming, in its "List of the Streets, Squares, Places, &c., in Edinburgh and Leith, with reference to their situations," will contain the following entry—"Begg, Dr., Builds., 11 Abbeyhill, 3." This is more honourable to him than if he had been enabled to rear a mansion for himself, or to occupy a position among the landed proprietors of the country. Such a commemoration comes not within the Scriptural reprobation of those whose "inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations, who call their lands after their own names" (Ps. xlix. 11). At the same time, he had himself a more than average share of that sense of the comfort and advantage of proprietorship which he so earnestly strove to excite in others. It is with a keen sympathy that he relates the following characteristic utterance of his great leader:—"Standing, one lovely afternoon long ago, with Dr. Chalmers, on the top of [one of] the Pentland Hills, that great man, as he ranged around the splendid landscape with his dreamy, poetical eyes and most benign countenance, exclaimed, 'Well, sir, it is a fine thing after all to be the owner of a section of a planet!'"

The work was not confined to our own country. The working men of Copenhagen heard of the movement, and resolved to imitate it. They made a representation on the subject to the Danish Government, and suggested that they should apply to Dr. Begg for information on the subject. In reply to a communication from the Government, Dr. Begg forwarded to them plans and specifications of the Edinburgh Society's model houses, and photographs of some of those which had been built.

We find Dr. Begg dating, at Bridge of Allan, on the 9th of January, a letter to Mr. Thorburn, as Moderator of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, on the subject of proposals that had been made in the Presbytery on the subject of "calls," and an alteration of the "Form of Process," in "cases" of heresy

or immorality in the Church courts. The former proposal had been agreed to by the Presbytery for the regulation of its own procedure; the latter could, of course, be dealt with only by Act of Assembly. Dr. Begg advocated the *status quo* in both cases. With respect to the former I thought, and still think, that he was substantially right. Ecclesiastical readers will understand the matter when I say that the question was between "calls at large" and calls to a particular person. Dr. Begg seemed to hold that the former should be the uniform rule. The matter has since been regulated authoritatively by the Assembly (1868) laying down the call at large as the rule, but allowing a special call in certain cases at the discretion of the Presbytery. As I took the opposite view to Dr. Begg as to the Form of Process, I may be allowed to say that the proposal was made by the late Sheriff Cleghorn with the view of remedying two evils; the one being that in very many cases the Presbytery are at once prosecutors and judges in the first instance; and the other, that the court of ultimate appeal is a jury of six hundred members! It was proposed, in substance, that the Presbytery should prosecute, and that the judges should be a committee or commission specially nominated by the Assembly, and composed of representatives from all quarters of the Church. The remedy proposed might not be the best,—and I admit that some of Dr. Begg's objections to it were of great weight,—but the evils are so great, and they become so patent in almost every case that comes up, that I am persuaded that some remedy ought to be devised. Very much on account of Dr. Begg's letter, Sheriff Cleghorn's overture was submitted to a committee of Presbytery to be put in a less specific form. When the report of the committee came up at the end of February Dr. Begg was present. With a further modification proposed by him, the transmission of the overture was unanimously agreed to. When the matter came before the Assembly three motions were made, the first by Dr. Gibson, seconded

by Dr. Forbes; the second by Sir Henry Moncreiff, seconded by Principal Fairbairn; the third by Sheriff Cleghorn, seconded by me. There was an "order of the day" for the Assembly to proceed to another business at four o'clock. When that hour approached it was proposed that the vote should be taken, but a member was anxious to speak.

"The MODERATOR—The question must be determined whether the discussion is to go on.

"Dr. BEGG—The question must be determined, and the House has the right to do so. Many members would wish to speak, no doubt. I myself would do so, and I have a good deal to say. (Laughter.) But I am willing to let the matter come to a close. (Cries of 'Vote, vote.') I move that the House proceed to a vote. (Hear, hear.)

"It was agreed to take the vote accordingly. Sheriff Cleghorn, with consent of his seconder, withdrew his motion. The vote was then taken between Dr. Gibson's motion and that of Sir H. W. Moncreiff. The numbers were—for Dr. Gibson's motion, 88; for Sir H. W. Moncreiff's motion, 96. Sir H. W. Moncreiff's motion was accordingly carried."

The motion of Sir Henry Moncreiff, in favour of which Sheriff Cleghorn and I withdrew ours, was simply, "That the General Assembly, having considered the overtures, resolve to appoint a large committee, consisting of members from various parts of the Church, to consider how far there are, or are not, any serious defects or evils in the existing law and practice of the Church, as to cases of libel; and how far, if there be such defects or evils, any remedy can be scripturally and constitutionally applied." Dr. Begg, of course, voted in favour of Dr. Gibson's motion.

It may be freely conceded that our present system would work well enough if accusers and accused were sincerely desirous only for the ascertainment of the truth. But I am afraid that this is a very rare case indeed. One strange anomaly is, that the accused, as a member of Presbytery, sits in judgment upon the question of the relevancy of the libel

against him. He is, indeed, suspended when once the libel is found relevant and served upon him; but in the preliminary stage he is able to interpose innumerable obstructions. Cases have occurred of late in which the evil of this has become sadly manifest.

On the 4th of April a meeting of citizens was held in Queen Street Hall, to consider the subject of public-house licenses. Dr. Guthrie presided, and introduced the proceedings by expressing regret at Dr. Begg's inability to be present:—"I am sorry, also, to say that we are to be deprived of the presence, the powerful speaking and pleading, and eloquence of my friend Dr. Begg, who, I am sorry to say, has been obliged to leave home, on account of the state of his health, for the South. You will permit me to read his letter to you. He says:—'I am sorry that I have been unwell, and that I will not have it in my power to be present at your very important meeting. This is to me a great disappointment, for I was anxious to say, in the most public way, how much I dislike and disapprove of the proceedings of our public authorities in the headlong granting of spirit-licenses. I am confident that this has much to do with the social and moral degradation which we all so much deplore, and that, if the present course is persevered in, it must impede and render nugatory all our schemes of social and sanitary reform. I do, therefore, earnestly hope and pray that your meeting may be very successful.'"

In connection with this I may say that, all through, Dr. Begg was a strenuous advocate of restrictive legislation of the character contemplated in Mr. M'Lagan's "Permissive Bill." He never saw his way to advocate or practise total abstinence. I used to say to him that it was not worth his while to be a non-abstainer, for all the enjoyment or benefit he could possibly get from the small quantity of wine that he occasionally drank! But by such banter, and by more serious arguments, he was never persuaded to enrol himself

among abstainers. I do not blame him for this, as his refusal was the result of serious consideration, but I thought, and do think, that it was a mistake. One consideration, I know, he regarded as important. It was, that the opposition of a non-abstainer to the granting of a license is more prevalent with the licensing body than that of an abstainer. This may be so;—probably it is so—but I do not think that countenance ought to be given to such an unreasonable prejudice. His main reason, however, was that he regarded total abstinence as a sort of cowardly attempt to escape from the obligation of the higher virtue of temperance. I often pointed out to him that his reasonings to this effect, however they might be valid as against some of the arguments frequently employed in favour of total abstinence, were of no force as against the thing itself. I ought to state that I do not doubt that in the last years of his life he was benefited by his very moderate use of wine, and that it would have been his duty to have recourse to it even if he had previously been a total abstainer. He never had much sympathy with the "working man's pipe and pot of beer" declamation. His advocacy of the interests of the working man took a different direction.

In the General Assembly of 1865 the subject of the use of hymns in public worship was introduced by the late Dr. Nelson of Greenock, a comparatively young man, but one whose great abilities and high character gave weight to his clear and intelligent utterances on any subject that he had occasion to handle. Dr. Begg, being Moderator, could take no part in the discussion. But in his closing address he went quite as far as usage permitted—some hinted, a little further—in indicating his own opinion on the subject. Early in 1866 Dr. Candlish proposed an overture in the Presbytery of Edinburgh, the general purport of which was, that a small number of the best hymns—not more than twenty-five—should be licensed for use in public worship. Dr. Begg was

not present at the meeting of Presbytery at which the overture was discussed; but at the meeting of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale on the 1st of May he "took the first word o' flytin'" by moving the following overture:—"It is humbly overtured by the Free Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale that the General Assembly, before adopting any new resolution in regard to the materials of praise, shall inquire (1) Whether any principle is involved in the singing of inspired or uninspired compositions in the worship of God; and (2) whether the experience of other Churches has indicated that the practical tendency of singing human poems in the worship of God is to supersede and set aside the inspired psalmody of Scripture." As the controversy was keenly maintained for several years, and as Dr. Begg very frequently took a prominent part in it, I may as well state, once for all, that he constantly maintained that the Book of Psalms is given by Divine authority as *the* hymnal of the Church, and that the use of uninspired compositions is *pro tanto* a setting aside of a Divine appointment. He also showed that such a proposal as that of Dr. Candlish was the insertion of the "thin end of the wedge," and must of necessity lead to the supersession of the Psalms to a far more considerable extent than it contemplated. When I had occasion to speak on the subject, I always took care to disclaim a great part of the arguments used by the advocates of hymns, and to avow my own strong preference for the Psalms, and our grand version of them, over any hymns with which I was acquainted. At the same time, I could not accept Dr. Begg's principle, that we are restricted to the use of inspired language in praise, while we are at liberty to employ our own words in prayer. I thus occupied the proverbially uninfluential position of the "cross-benches." Had Dr. Begg grounded his opposition to hymns simply on Christian expediency, I should have very cordially supported him; but as I could not go the length to which his argument led him, still less the further length to which

I considered that it ought in consistency to have led him, and as he always framed his motions on the line of his arguments, I was reluctantly compelled to vote against the motion, although my sympathies were very much with the views of those who proposed them. Eventually a hymn-book was prepared, containing, not twenty-five, but 417 hymns, and was sanctioned by the Assembly of 1872.

Looking back over the experience of twenty years, I may be allowed to express the opinion that the use of the hymn-book has not been satisfactory, while I admit that a contrary opinion is held by many. In the first place, the hymn-book has been introduced into some congregations in neglect of or opposition to the caution that it should not be introduced in cases where it would interfere with the peace of the congregation. In other cases members have refrained from opposing its introduction only because they felt that it would be invidious to object, and have considered that they were unfairly treated in being reduced to the alternative of consenting to what they disapproved of, or being regarded as peace-breakers. As to the book itself, I believe that it is a very good collection, as compared with others; and this is likely to be so, as I know that a great deal of pains was bestowed on its compilation. But it contains a large number of hymns which no one would regard as very good, and some to which very positive objections have been made. As to Dr. Begg's anticipation that the hymns would gradually supersede the Psalms, I suspect that it is being realised in many cases. I am told that it is not unusual in the course of a service to sing two portions of Psalms and three entire hymns; that is, eight stanzas from the Psalter and fifteen or eighteen from the Hymnal; the Psalter stanzas consisting of four lines each, and those from the Hymnal frequently containing eight lines. Lastly, musical people tell me that, through want of acquaintance with the hymn tunes, the people in some of our congregations leave the singing of

them entirely to the choir;—as great an evil as can well be.

It devolved on Dr. Begg, as Moderator of the Assembly of 1865, to preach a sermon at the opening of the Assembly of 1866, and to propose his successor in the chair. His sermon, on Deut. xxxiii. 16—"The good will of him that dwelt in the bush"—was less elaborate than many sermons delivered on such occasions; but it was characterised by the preacher's usual earnestness and manly sense. So far as I remember, it was the only opening sermon I ever heard that was not read. My impression is, that it was not even written before delivery; but it was afterwards published and largely circulated. After the Assembly was constituted, Dr. Begg, in a graceful speech, nominated Mr. (now Dr.) Wilson of Dundee as his successor in the chair, and so closed his Moderatorial career, and descended to the position of an ordinary member. In this capacity he took a leading part in the proceedings of the Assembly. In addition to the presentation of the reports of his two committees—on Popery, and on Houses for the Working Classes—he made an important speech on the Union question, which will claim our attention ere long; and one on hymns, in which he unsuccessfully advocated the adoption by the Assembly of the overture which he had proposed in the inferior court. Having already stated in general his course of action on this subject, I shall content myself here with extracting a characteristic "bit" from his speech:—

"If men really knew the Psalms, they would find how wonderfully full of grand and appropriate praise they were. He had heard a story the other day which illustrated the kind of feeling which prevailed to a large extent among the people on this subject. A young man from Edinburgh had been addressing a prayer-meeting somewhere in the North, and after his address was over, he said he would give out a hymn. 'Na,' said a grave elder, 'we maun ha'e a psalm.' 'No,' replied the young man, 'I'll give out a hymn; I can't

get a psalm to meet my case.' 'What? What?' said an old wife who was sitting near. 'What's he speakin' aboot?' 'Oh,' answered the elder, 'this lad says he canna get a psalm to meet his case; he says he canna find his case in the Psalms.' 'Weel, weel,' said she, 'I doot the lad hasna a case at a', if he canna find it in the Psalms.'"

In some respects the most important speech made by Dr. Begg in this Assembly was in moving the adoption of the Report on the Conversion of the Jews. I very gladly present an extract from it, as indicating his interest in missionary work—an interest for which he did not always get credit:—

"A blessing still rested on all who sought the good of Israel. In connection with the ultimate conversion of the Jews, immense advantages were to result to the Church and to the world. The restoration of them was to be as life from the dead; and so far as they could discover, the greatest events that were to mark the future history of the world, and of the Church, were to be connected with that event. Some imagined that, because blindness in part had happened unto Israel, no efforts should be made for their conversion; but it was always improper for men to make their ideas of the future the rule of their duty. Their rule of duty was the Word of God; and experience had proved, though large numbers of the Jews had not been converted, some of them were being converted still, as they were in the primitive age. Instances were mentioned in that report; and who could tell, in connection with the great circulation of the Divine Word, to which reference had been made—who could tell what result might arise in connection with that, accompanied by the outpourings of God's Holy Spirit?"

The same speech contains important references to Romanism, as "the same not only impure but bloody system that it ever was, and that it would continue so till the end." This was a matter on which Dr. Begg continually insisted, thereby bringing on himself innumerable sneers, and charges of bigotry, uncharitableness, and fanaticism. But it was a small matter for him to be judged of man's judgment.

The summer of 1866 was rendered sadly memorable by the ravages of the *rinderpest* or cattle-plague; and in the autumn we were threatened with a visitation of Asiatic cholera. Dr. Begg brought these two matters before the Presbytery of Edinburgh at its meeting in August, and proposed that the brethren, at such times and in such ways as they might severally deem best, should bring these matters before their people, as a subject of humiliation and deprecation. The proposal received the cordial acquiescence of the Presbytery. On the subject of cholera Dr. Begg could speak with the more feeling, that he had witnessed its direful ravages in Paisley in 1832 (see vol. i. pp. 212 *seq.*)

At the next meeting of Presbytery a matter came up in respect to which Dr. Begg took an unusual course. A minister was called from one of the churches in Edinburgh to an English Presbyterian Church. He intimated to his congregation that he thought it right to accept the call, and requested as a personal favour that they should offer no opposition to his removal. He stated this very distinctly to the Presbytery, expecting that they would, as a matter of course, agree to the translation. Dr. Begg, however, moved that the translation should not take place. He was defeated by a majority of one (13—12); but dissented and complained. As he declared that he was determined not to fall from his complaint, but to carry it to the Synod, and if necessary to the Assembly, which would have had the effect of keeping both the congregation in suspense for eight months, the minister considered himself shut up to advising the English congregation to fall from the call, and this they did, with the consent of their own Presbytery. It is undoubtedly the law of the Free Church that the consent of his Presbytery is indispensable in order to a minister's acceptance of a call to another congregation. But in almost every case they regard the minister's own judgment, when it is distinctly stated, as the most important element in the formation of their judg-

ment, remembering, I suppose, the proverb as to the case of conveying a steed to the trough, as compared with the difficulty of compelling him to drink. Generally our Church courts are facile enough in obtempering the precept to speed the parting guest. Although the minister in question was taken aback by Dr. Begg's action, it made no difference in their personal relations. The matter was a small one in itself; but it was not without importance as showing that the proceedings in the call of a minister are not a mere form.

About this time the subject of working men's houses assumed a new aspect, so far as Edinburgh was concerned. With a special Act of Parliament, and with a most energetic Lord Provost of the city,[1] a vigorous effort was made for the improvement of the city by the pulling down of wretched houses and the opening of well-aired streets. All very good. But then the houses, wretched as they were, had many inhabitants. It would have been well for these inhabitants to be turned out of these, provided adequate means had been taken to supply them with better ones into which they could turn; and the Improvement Act did make some provision for this. But the accommodation which was proposed to be provided was altogether inadequate; and moreover, it was not proposed to be supplied in time. For example, the beautiful street called after the Provost's name was formed by the eviction of a very large number of tenants, and it does not contain a single dwelling-house. Other new streets do contain dwelling-houses, but at rents above the reach of those who were dispossessed in order to their formation. Dr. Begg was touched in the apple of his eye, and he came out with an unanswerable appeal for the assignment, on fair terms, of the Heriot's Hospital ground in the neighbourhood of Leith Walk, for which he had so long pleaded in

[1] Mr. William Chambers.—T. S.

vain. His appeal was not altogether without effect; but till this day no really adequate relief has been given. Many of the worst houses were pulled down. This had the effect of increasing the demand for those that remained. The result was, that many respectable families were unable to get houses at rents which they could pay, and were obliged to betake themselves to lodging-houses. This I regard as a very great evil. Every wife should have a house of her own; every family should have its "ain fireside."

The Hon. Neal Dow, a distinguished American temperance advocate, being in this country, a public meeting was held in the Music Hall "to welcome him and to promote the interests of temperance and reform." Dr. Begg was the leading speaker. From an eloquent speech I shall extract only a few sentences:—"There were certain principles in regard to which all true-hearted men were agreed. The first of these principles he took to be, that there was no true reform which did not contemplate the moral state of society; and they were not real statesmen who did not look upon society in its moral relations. He thought one of the evils under which Great Britain laboured was that mere talent, mere physical progress, would advance society apart from moral progress. He heard men spoken of as exceedingly talented. He believed, if Satan himself could assume a bodily shape, and bring with him a number of those other demons whom Milton described—including especially Mammon—their service would be in great request. . . . The drunkard was a great enemy to himself, but he was also a great enemy to society. Drunkards filled our jails, our poorhouses, and laid heavy burdens on society, and therefore he held that society was entitled to protect itself against such a monstrous and palpable evil. . . . Drunkenness, when it appeared in public, should be treated as a crime. . . . He thought in the Temperance Catechism, as in the Shorter Catechism, there

should be a *Required* as well as a *Forbidden*.[1] He held it was required that working men should have power to get good, comfortable houses; they would then be less likely to be dragged into the public-house. And what hindered that in Edinburgh at present? Why, the inability of working men to get ground on which to build houses. And who were hindering them? The kindly rulers of this city; and in doing so they were doing injury to the institution they governed."

At the autumn meeting of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale Dr. Begg proposed an overture with reference to the "inadequate supply of ministers." This was an evil from which the Free Church was then suffering, in common with all the British Churches. Dr. Begg suggested various methods by which the evil might be remedied, the chief being the provision of synodic bursaries. The remedy has been applied with good effect in other Synods, though not in ours, and in combination with other influences, has been abundantly efficacious. Dr. Begg also seconded another proposal, introduced by Mr. Mackenzie of Edinburgh, for rendering more effective, by rendering more systematic, the presbyterial and synodic oversight of the congregations within their respective bounds.

At the meeting of the Presbytery of Edinburgh in October, and again in November, Dr. Begg called attention to Sabbath railway trains. The pretext for these was the obligation laid upon railway companies which carried mails to run mail-trains on the Sabbath. I believe that the evil—and it is a very great one—will not be got rid of but by a demand for

[1] While no Scottish reader can need an explanation of this, it may be necessary for the information of others to state that in the Shorter Catechism there is an exposition of the Ten Commandments, the questions being put and answered with respect to each of them. "What is required in the —— Commandment?" and "What is forbidden in the —— Commandment?" With the additional question in regard to the Second, Fourth, and Fifth, "What are the reasons annexed to the —— Commandment?"—T. S.

the abolition of mail-trains and the cessation of Post-Office work on the Sabbath. At the November meeting he also proposed, that "in every case of ordination or induction of a minister within the bounds, a short statement be made of the solemn authority of Presbyterian Church Government." In connection with this Dr. Blaikie told a story which is too good to be lost. "One of the members of the Presbytery had told him, that once he was gravely informed by a Church of England parson, that he had never been baptized, he had never been married, and he never could be buried!"

CHAPTER XLIX.

SUPPLY OF PROBATIONERS—INTEMPERANCE—OFFICES AND OATHS BILL—SABBATH PROTECTION—GLASGOW CASE—CHAMBERS STREET.

In the proceedings of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, at their ordinary meeting in February 1867, Dr. Begg took a prominent part. He brought forward an elaborate report of a committee which had been appointed at his instance on the "inadequate supply of probationers." The report recommended (1.) that steps should be taken for the removal of obstructions which prevented teachers in the receipt of Government grants from studying for the ministry. (2.) That the number of secondary schools should be increased. (3.) "Ministers ought to have their eye on talented and pious young men in their congregations, especially such as are connected with Sabbath-schools and Fellowship meetings; and should give them, if they think it right, all prudent encouragement to go over to the ministry; while parents also should be encouraged to devote talented and pious sons to the same important office." (4.) That there should be summer sessions in the universities, so that the undergraduate course, without diminution of extent, might be accomplished in half the time. (5.) That Bursary Funds should be instituted in every Synod, and in some of the larger Presbyteries. (6.) "Every exertion should be made to increase the incomes of our ministers, both by means of the Sustentation Fund and otherwise." (7.) That special and fervent prayer should be made to the Lord of the harvest, that He would send labourers unto His harvest, both at home and abroad.

Dr. Begg expounded these recommendations at length; and with some slight modifications suggested by Dr. Candlish, they were unanimously approved by the Presbytery.

The next subject of consideration was "intemperance;" and Dr. Begg cordially supported a motion, made by Mr. Pirie, that the members of the Presbytery should exert themselves for the diminution of the number of public-houses. Now, as always, he maintained that drunkenness should be dealt with as a crime. "In Russia," he said, "if a man was found drunk and incapable, he was obliged to sweep the streets two or three hours next morning as a warning to him for the future; and in the United States of America, if a man was brought to death by drunkenness, his widow had a fair action against the publican who gave him the drink; and in two recent cases he observed one widow got 50 dollars, and another 200 dollars, as compensation for the evil done."

Dr. Begg next "called the attention of the Presbytery to a matter of very great importance—the 'Offices and Oaths Bill,' at present before Parliament, the effect of which would be to make it lawful for the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland to be a Roman Catholic. He submitted that this cut very deeply into the constitution of the country (as they understood it), as settled after a very long struggle at the Revolution of 1688. It was quite plain that if the representative of the Queen was a Romanist, the throne itself might be occupied by a Romanist; in fact, it was coming as close as possible to enacting that the throne might be occupied by a Romanist; in other words, overturning the main result of the long struggle in this country for civil liberty in connection with the occupancy of the throne. He ventured to propose that the Presbytery should petition against the Bill. Mr. Thomas Smith seconded the motion, which was unanimously agreed to." There has not as yet been a Romanist Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland; but there has been a Romanist Governor-General of India, and there is at this moment a

Romanist Home Secretary, the former appointed by one political party, the latter by the other. The Bill in question was introduced by Sir Colman O'Lochlan. It was not adopted by Lord Derby's Government, but it was supported by several members of that Government, and by Mr. Gladstone, the leader of the Opposition. The second reading was carried in the House of Commons by a majority of 102 (195—93).[1]

Just before this Dr. Begg had addressed to the newspapers a letter on the subject of the appointment of a Secretary of State for Scotland. In this he used the same arguments which he had employed several years earlier, and which prevailed when used by others a dozen years later. Thus "bread cast on the waters" is ever found, albeit it may be, "after many days."

On the 21st of March, at the "Annual Soiree of the Edinburgh and Leith Sabbath Protection Association," Dr. Begg made a thoughtful speech on Sabbath Observance, in its bearing on the interests of working men. I am not aware that he had made a special study of political economy, but he had clearly apprehended and strongly held that if men work seven days when they ought only to work six, they will eventually get only six days' pay for seven days' work, and they will prematurely wear themselves out. This was a favourite subject with him. On this occasion "he pointed out the close connection which existed between religion and the Sabbath. He alluded to the efforts made by working men to reduce their hours of labour. He had always had a liking for that division of time said to have been made by Alfred the Great—the division of the day into three periods of eight hours each—and he would like to see working men

[1] By the "Catholic Emancipation Act" of 1829 Romanists were excluded from five offices—the Regency, the Lord Chancellorship, the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland, the Lord Chancellorship of Ireland, and the Commissionership to the General Assembly. The "Offices and Oaths Bill," which eventually became law, opened up to them the third and fourth of these high offices. —T. S.

obtain a reduction of their hours of labour, and the Sabbath into the bargain."

In the General Assembly of this year Dr. Begg made an important speech, and proposed a motion in connection with a case which came up from the Presbytery of Glasgow. I do not deem it expedient to re-open the case, or to enter into the details of it. The Presbytery of Glasgow had unanimously censured the doctrine taught by one of their members regarding the perpetual obligation of the Ten Commandments and the authority of the Old Testament Scripture. Questions were put to him on these points, which he answered at length. A majority of the Presbytery accepted his answers, while a minority dissented and complained to the Synod, mainly on the ground that he represented his answers as an *explanation* of his original statements, whereas the minority held that the Presbytery, having already condemned—and unanimously—these statements, were not entitled to accept anything short of a retractation of them. The Synod referred the case to the Assembly. After very long and able pleadings at the bar, Dr. Rainy moved, in an extremely able speech, to the effect that the sermons contained statements at variance with the Confession of Faith and the teaching of Scripture; "but in respect that the statements submitted by —— in explanation, warrant . . . the General Assembly in holding that ——'s views are in substantial accordance with the teaching of the Confession of Faith, and that he disclaims the contrary doctrine which various passages in the sermons have been found by the Presbytery and the Assembly to convey, they find it unnecessary to take further judicial action in this case." The motion further contains very strong expressions of "pain and regret" at the original statements, and concludes thus:—"The General Assembly enjoin —— to avoid for the future statements and expressions such as have given occasion to these proceedings; and they seriously and affectionately admonish him to cherish henceforward a deeper sense of the

humility and caution which it becomes the preachers of the Word to manifest in delivering instruction to the flock of Jesus Christ."

Dr. Begg, in a much shorter, but a very effective speech, moved a much shorter motion: "That the General Assembly dismiss the dissent and complaint, and remit to the Presbytery of Glasgow to proceed in the case according to the laws of the Church." Dr. Nixon did not make a third motion, but suggested the appointment of a committee to have a personal interview with him. Dr. Rainy's motion was carried against Dr. Begg's by a majority of 190 (301—111).

It is with great reluctance that I have referred to this matter at all, and I am quite aware that the device of suppressing the name is of little use. I should have omitted all mention of it, were it not that Dr. Begg was much reprobated as a "heresy-hunter," on account of the part that he took in it. In point of fact, he and those who spoke in support of his motion did not condemn the sermons more strongly then did Dr. Rainy and those who supported him. Dr. Begg's motion was certainly the more logical of the two; and in some respects it was the less severe, as the result of the libel to which it pointed might have been an acquittal, whereas that actually carried severely censured a man who had never been put on his trial; for all the proceedings in the court below had only been as to the question whether he should be tried or no. I am confident that all who knew Dr. Begg will acquit him of any desire to deal harshly in a case of this kind.

In this Assembly Dr. Begg made the longest speech, I suppose, that he ever made. It was on the Union question and the proceedings of the Union Committee, and will therefore come under our consideration in a subsequent chapter. But it must be stated here, as bearing in important ways on his position in the Church, that he and others resigned their position on the Union Committee. From the time the "Anti-

Union Party" came into being Dr. Begg became its acknowledged leader. I have stated already that I have little sympathy with the frequent denunciations of political and ecclesiastical parties. The great matter is, that in the action of parties, as of individuals, all things be done with honesty and with charity.

Dr. Begg began his Union speech by stating that he was very unwell, and that he would not have been in the Assembly at all but for his sense of the extreme importance of the motion under discussion. The excitement of the discussion itself, and his apprehension of the evil results that would follow the course which the majority adopted, did not tend to his recovery. He does not seem to have been present at any of the subsequent meetings of the Assembly. The reports of three Committees of which he was convener were given in by friends; two by Dr. Gibson, and one by Dr. Candlish.

For some months Dr. Begg was unable to take any part in public work, excepting in the pulpit; and even his Sabbath duties he was able to perform only in part. The first occasion on which I find him appearing in public was at the Presbytery meeting in August. Two steamers had begun to ply on Sabbath between Leith and Aberdour. These were chiefly patronised by excursionists of a disreputable class; and as whisky was sold on board, the beautiful village of Aberdour was converted into a scene of drunken riot. Mr. Ross, the Free Church minister of Aberdour,[1] and others, exerted themselves vigorously in order to the suppression of the nuisance; but with little success. Mr. Pirie, Convener of the Presbytery's Sabbath Observance Committee, brought the matter before the Presbytery, and Dr. Begg made a long speech on the subject. "He was willing that the working classes should have all manner of recreation; he himself had

[1] Afterwards Dr. Ross of Bridge of Allan, and now resident in Edinburgh. —T. S.

done something in the way of promoting it; but if the principle now enunciated were established and extended, there was no limit to the amount of work they might be required to do."

Early in September we find Dr. Begg putting forth through the newspapers a proposal for a new street along the north side of the University, to connect the South Bridge and George IV. Bridge. He stated that four years earlier he had employed an architect to sketch such a street, and to give an approximate estimate of the property whose destruction would be involved in its construction. The idea was taken up by the authorities, and was soon realised in the construction of "Chambers Street," exactly on the plan which Dr. Begg suggested. He spoke at great length on the subject at a public meeting held towards the end of November. He was ably supported by such men as the late Sir Robert Christison, Drs. Alexander and Andrew Wood, Sir George Harrison, and Dr. W. Robertson of the Greyfriars Church; all of whom, as well as himself, have now passed away, and all of whom, like him, did notable and noble service in their day. At a meeting of Presbytery, in September, a communication was received from the *Sabbath Alliance* regarding the increase of Sabbath desecration. On the motion of Dr. Begg, the communication was referred to the Presbytery's Sabbath Observance Committee, with instructions to report on it at next meeting. When, at the meeting in November, the report was brought up by Mr. Pirie, the convener, Dr. Begg moved its adoption, and again stated strongly his views on this most important matter. Meantime he had brought the same subject before the Synod at its meeting in October, proposing that the Synod should recommend the ministers within the bounds to call the special attention of their congregations, on the first Sabbath of December, to the forms of Sabbath profanation existing within the bounds, and to the vast importance of "remembering the Sabbath-day to

keep it holy." After speaking of Post-Office work, and other forms of desecration, he said:—"It was also of importance that the Synod should call attention to the way in which the Sabbath should be observed. The obligation of attendance at church more than once a day should be enforced, and the heads of families ought to be far more careful of the way their servants spend the Sabbath-day."

CHAPTER L.

SABBATH CABS—CONDITION OF THE POOR—MAYNOOTH ENDOWMENT — NEWINGTON SCHOOL — DISESTABLISHMENT OF IRISH CHURCH—SITE OF EDINBURGH INFIRMARY.

EARLY in the year 1868 Dr. Begg entered afresh into vigorous efforts for the protection of the Sabbath. On this occasion it was the desecration of the Sabbath by unnecessary employment of cabs on the Lord's-day that was on his mind. In the meeting of Presbytery in January, he stated that he and others had had an interview with the magistrates of the city on the subject. "There was," he said, "an impression abroad that there was an obligation on the part of cab-proprietors to place their cabs on the stances on the Lord's-day; but they had succeeded in obtaining from the magistrates a contradiction of that impression." The following is very characteristic of Dr. Begg's manner of viewing subjects:— "The Committee also brought before the magistrates the propriety of making no regulations for cab-fares on the Sabbath-day; the Committee being of opinion that the magistrates, having no special Act of Parliament providing regulations for the fares of cabs on the Sabbath-day, they were not entitled to enforce the regulations for cab-fares on that day, but let the cab-proprietors make whatever charge they pleased. The Committee considered that, as the cab-proprietors would then charge pretty heavily, they would put to the test the necessity of the employment of cabs on the Sabbath." Thoroughly sympathising with the object in view, I am afraid that neither the end proposed nor the logic by which it is supported is unexceptionable. As to the latter, I

presume that the magistrates were authorised, or probably were required, by Act of Parliament, to regulate the cab-fares. The fact that the Act made no distinction betwixt the Sabbath and other days would scarcely warrant the conclusion that the magistrates had no authority to regulate the charges for the Sabbath. It may safely be assumed that the Act as little gave them authority to fix the rates for Tuesday or Friday. But as to the course recommended, it might indeed be a desperate remedy for a desperate evil; but I cannot think that it was in itself other than an evil. If adopted, and if it wrought as Dr. Begg anticipated that it would work, it would restrain the comparatively poor in the *necessary* use of cabs, while it would put little restraint on their *unnecessary* use by the rich.

At the same meeting of Presbytery Dr. Begg brought up a long report, and delivered a long speech, on the subject of National Education. The report laid down some conditions as essential to a national system. The most important of these was the following:—

"3. That some effectual security should exist that religious instruction in the Bible and Catechism shall, as hitherto, be given as an ordinary part of education in all the schools, it being understood as before that any parent may, on his own responsibility, withdraw his child from such instruction."

I have already stated more than once that Dr. Begg materially modified, and indeed reversed, his views as to the necessity for statutory security for religious instruction in national schools. This is beyond question. Dr. Guthrie and he at one time were rightly regarded as the leaders of a "liberal" party on this subject. But there was never any variation of his view that such instruction *must* be given. Only down to a little before this time he believed that the people of Scotland would be a law to themselves in the matter; while now he did not regard that as certain, and considered that the item of religious instruction should be

embodied as an element in the statute which should introduce a national system of education. On this matter he spoke very decidedly and emphatically.

On the 30th of March a public meeting was held in the Queen Street Hall, "for the purpose of considering the state of the poorer classes in Edinburgh, and the best means of alleviating their condition." The first resolution was moved by the late Sir James Simpson, and seconded by Dr. Begg. In a long and able speech he advocated systematic visitation of the poor by volunteer agents, not for the purpose of giving them alms or lowering their sense of independence, but in the way of friendliness and good neighbourhood. "People were apt to think, on going into the low districts of the city, that they were going into dangerous places; but they would be certain to find, even in the poorest and most degraded districts, many that were struggling against the tide, and were anxious to do well. They would find some beautiful flowers in that moral desert; and they would never meet with more unfeigned gratitude than that which sprang from the hearts of the poor for kindness shown towards them. . . . As to the working classes, they did not wish, and they would not have, charity. What they wanted was fair play. . . . We were bound, from every consideration of Christianity, patriotism, and self-defence, to alleviate the condition of those whom we cannot leave neglected any longer." An association was formed of the character contemplated, and I have no doubt that it has done a considerable amount of good, or rather prevented a considerable amount of evil. But the problem is still unsolved practically, of elevating those who are depressed, and preventing the depression of others. It is a problem of stupendous importance.

At the annual meeting of the Scottish Reformation Society a "tiff" ensued, in which Dr. Begg took a prominent part. It was at the time of the agitation as to the endowment of Maynooth. At the public meeting of the Reformation

Society, Mr. David M'Laren, an excellent man, but a Voluntary of a somewhat extreme type, moved, as an amendment to the approval of the report, "That, in view of the increased support given to Popery by the British Legislature and Government of late years, and of recent proposals in the same direction by opposite parties in the State, this meeting is so deeply impressed by the evils of Popery, both in regard to the civil and religious interests of the community, that, reserving individual sentiments on the subject of Government endowment of religion in the abstract, they are of opinion that, in the event of its becoming apparent that the discontinuance of the present Government support of that system, and still more any extinction of that support, can only be procured by the disendowment of all religious bodies, it will be the duty of all sound Protestants to welcome such a measure." Dr. Begg objected to this motion as out of order, and inconsistent with the constitution of the Society. The general sentiment of the meeting was with him, and rightly so. Yet one almost regrets that, by taking this course, he cut himself off from the right to discuss the question. He would have had no difficulty in showing whereto such a principle would lead. It was admitted on both sides that it is wrong to endow error; in the Reformation Society Dr. Begg was neither entitled to affirm, nor Mr. M'Laren to deny, that it is a right thing to endow truth. The motion then was substantially that the Society should tell the Government and the world, not that they should not do wrong, but that if they *would* do one wrong, they should also do what some members of the Society regarded as another wrong. That which all admitted to be wrong was permitted to be done, provided it were accompanied by what some believed to be also a wrong. The Voluntaryism was but thinly disguised.

At the annual meeting of the Sabbath Alliance, Dr. Begg made use of a happy illustration in opposition to a Bill intro-

duced into Parliament by Mr. Hughes ("Tom Brown"). The object of the Bill was to prohibit traffic during "canonical" hours, and to legalise it during other parts of the day. "Suppose," said Dr. Begg, "they were to legislate that theft above a certain amount should be liable to punishment, or that the murder of grown-up individuals should be liable to punishment, and not the murder of infants—suppose they were to frame their laws upon such a theory as that, any one saw that, instead of promoting morality, they would, by that very arrangement, destroy morality." He urged the importance of concentrated efforts for the discontinuance of Sabbath work in the Post-Office.

Besides taking part in the discussion of some "cases" which came before the Assembly of 1868, delivering a glowing—and let me say a well-merited—tribute to Mr. Robert Gordon, who was proposed to fill the vacancy in the Clerkship of the Assembly, caused by the lamented death of Dr. Clason,—and moving the appointment of the present writer to the Chair of Apologetics in the New College, vacant by the equally lamented death of Dr. Bannerman;—he made an important speech in connection with the Report of the Education Committee. In the course of his speech he mentioned a fact which might almost be regarded as autobiographical, inasmuch as it was an item in the life of the Newington Congregation, which was really a part of him, and he of it. "I have had a school since the Free Church came into existence. I am not sure whether it was the first Free Church school. At any rate, I think it was established the day after the Disruption. It has now assumed very considerable importance. We have a most admirable teacher, who was coveted even by the managers of the Normal Seminary, though, fortunately for us, he declined to accept their call. Now that school is attended by children of the middle class. It contains between two and three hundred pupils admirably taught; and I have no hesitation in saying that as good an

education can be got in that school as can be got almost anywhere, and at a comparatively reasonable price." I do not think I am mistaken in supposing that Mr. Joseph Chalmers, the present teacher of the school, was the teacher then; and I can testify that what is said of the school and its teacher in 1868 is equally true of them both in 1887.

The question of the disestablishment of the Irish Church was *the* question of that day; and Dr. Begg, believing that its simple disestablishment and the confiscation of its revenues would ultimately issue in advantage to the interests of Romanism, endeavoured to persuade the Assembly to oppose it. It was found that there was not time during the sittings of the Assembly to discuss the question. The very unusual —I believe unprecedented—course was adopted of appointing a special meeting of the Commission, to be held a fortnight later, for its discussion. Dr. Begg, who had given notice of a motion on the subject, acquiesced in the arrangement, and indeed voted for it, in opposition to a motion by Mr. Robert Johnson that the matter should be dropped, with an expression of regret that the Assembly was unable to give the subject such consideration as its importance demanded. Dr. Begg also spoke on Sabbath Observance, and moved the adoption of his friend Mr. Kidston's Report of the Temperance Committee. In his speech on that subject he strongly advocated the "Local Option" principle. I do not know that he was the first to propound this principle; but certainly he came out as its strenuous advocate when its advocacy required more courage than it does now. His speech on the Union question will come under review in a subsequent chapter.

At the special meeting of Commission, held on the 17th of June, Dr. Begg brought forward the motion of which he had given notice in the Assembly. It was as follows:—

"The attention of the Commission having been called, by the report of a committee, to certain proposals submitted to Parliament with the view of healing the disaffection of

Ireland, which proposals are fraught with momentous issues to the interests of the Church in these lands, and therefore cannot fail to awaken a lively interest in all the friends of divine truth throughout the kingdom, the Commission resolve that, while they will take no part in the present struggles of political parties, they would deprecate as the greatest calamity the public endowment of Popery, and are bound, without reference to political measures or their details, to press upon our rulers, on the one hand, the solemn obligations under which they are laid by the Word of God to foster and promote, by all legitimate and practicable means, the cause of truth, and to do nothing, directly or indirectly, to countenance or promote error; and upon our people, on the other hand, their duty to stand by the great principle, that nations as such are bound to acknowledge the truth and promote the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ."

The counter-motion, proposed by the late Dr. Nelson of Greenock, disclaimed Voluntaryism indeed, and most sincerely on the part of its mover and many of those who voted for it; but it advocated simple disestablishment and disendowment. It was the following:—

"The Commission approve of the report and reappoint the committee. Adverting to the proposals made in Parliament in reference to the ecclesiastical affairs of Ireland, while maintaining the obligation of nations to promote the cause of truth and to abstain from giving help and countenance to anti-Christian error, and while recognising the lawfulness of the establishment and endowment of the Church—though only where the circumstances are such that the cause of truth may be thereby promoted—yet, inasmuch as in their judgment the existing establishment of the Church in Ireland is not such as to fulfil the condition, and inasmuch as the practical alternative is the endowment of all Churches or the endowment of none, the Commission deem it their duty to declare that the disendowment of all is the course recommended by a regard to the highest temporal and spiritual interests of that part of the United Kingdom."

Dr. Nelson's motion was carried against Dr. Begg's by a majority of 45 (99—34). Of course a vote in which only

133 members took part, in a Commission consisting of more than 600, was not of much consequence, and, but for what has continuously followed, might have been disregarded; yet it certainly showed the existence of a Voluntary tendency in a Church which had been promoted in protest against Voluntaryism not less than against Erastianism. This matter of the Irish Church brought Dr. Begg into no little trouble, or, at least, into what would have been much trouble to a man less able to bear abuse. A meeting was held in the Crystal Palace, got up and attended mainly by Evangelical Episcopalians, to oppose the movement. Dr. Begg was invited to be present, and sent a letter of apology, expressing a general concurrence with the object of the meeting. Mr. (now Dr.) Badenoch, Secretary of the Scottish Reformation Society, and well known as a special friend of Dr. Begg, was on the platform. A letter was sent to the *Daily News* (anonymous), attacking Dr. Begg and the Reformation Society in virulent terms, charging him with inconsistency in lending his countenance to the maintenance of "black prelacy," and declaring that he and the *Bulwark*, of which he was editor, and Mr. Whalley in the House of Commons, were doing more than all other men together to advance the interests of Romanism, by disgusting all reasonable men with the Protestantism which they professed to advocate. This letter was sent by another—or perhaps the same—anonymous writer to an Edinburgh paper, the *Daily Review*, and gave rise to a series of bitter attacks, of which Dr. Begg took no notice. In this he did well. But it seems to be not improper that I should now state what he would probably have stated in his own vindication, had he acknowledged the competency of the self-constituted court which assumed the right to judge him. Dr. Begg always represented himself as in spirit a Covenanter, and was proud of his descent from members of that body. He never ceased to sympathise with their heart-hatred of Popery and prelacy.

But in the actual case he had to do with a special and peculiar state of matters. There was in Ireland a Protestant Church established, and a Presbyterian Church, very closely connected with his own, partially endowed. These it was proposed to disestablish and disendow. Now of the disestablishment and disendowment of the Protestant Church he would not have disapproved, if the recognition of national obligation to promote the cause of Christ had been conserved in the disestablishment. But the proposal to disestablish, as actually made, and as eventually carried out, repudiated such conservation. Henceforth, so far as Ireland was concerned, the nation, as a nation, was to recognise no distinction between the truth of God and its opposite. As to the disendowment, he believed that the revenues of the Church would eventually go, at least indirectly, to the support of Romanism. His forebodings have been already verified to some extent, and will probably be so more and more as time goes on. He did not love prelacy, but he preferred it immeasurably to Popery. He did not believe that a nation does its duty whensoever it maintains an Established Church, but he considered that a nation did *not* do its duty when it stood aloof from all recognition of the Church. We are often told that the "Establishment Principle" is a misuse of terms. I am quite willing to admit that the terms may be misused. Yet I do not know that any one has ever held that principle is violated in every case in which there is no Established Church. The principle is national obligation, and one of many possible applications of that principle is the support of a Church. In some circumstances that particular application of the principle may not be expedient. In no case is it exhaustive of the principle. But the principle is violated when a nation disestablishes a Church on the ground of simple Voluntaryism and "religious equality." Unhappily in all sections of the kingdom—in England, in Ireland, and in Scotland—other applications of

the principle were scarcely existent. It had come to be considered that the national duty was discharged by the maintenance of an Established Church; and the cessation of this maintenance, without the initiation of any other mode of discharging the duty, and still more its cessation on the ground of the denial, express or implied, of the incumbency of such duty, might well be regarded as an evil, as a national sin of no small heinousness. I say nothing of the question of "spoliation." On this point Dr. Begg sometimes expressed himself more strongly than I should be disposed to do. I quite readily admit that the revenues of a National Church are national property, but property for the application of which to religious uses the national faith is pledged. But the provision that the revenues set free by disestablishment may be applied *to any purposes except religious ones*, I cannot but regard as a violation of the national faith. And such a provision I understand to have been the corner-stone of Mr. Gladstone's disestablishment of the Irish Church.

At a somewhat later date a letter was published, in which Dr. Begg refused to vote for Mr. Moncrieff as representative in Parliament of the Glasgow and Aberdeen Universities, on the ground of the action of Mr. Gladstone's Government in the matter of the Irish Church. In this letter he takes substantially the same course which I have sketched. It must have been specially painful to him to find himself obliged to oppose the candidature of Mr. Moncrieff, of whom, and of whose career, all Scotchmen, and especially all Free Churchmen, had good cause to be proud.

Towards the close of this year Dr. Begg took part, by speech and writing, in a controversy as to the site of the New Infirmary which was then projected. He advocated its being built on the old site. This was a question regarding which much might be said on either side, but regarding which it is not necessary nowto say anything, as it has been decided; and I do not think that any citizen of Edinburgh, as he gazes

on that noble Institution from the Meadows or from Lauriston, would now wish that it had been decided otherwise. It ought, however, to be said, in justice to Dr. Begg, that one of his strongest arguments against the removal was the inconvenience of having the Infirmary removed so far from the University. That argument has since been answered by the removal of the Medical School to the immediate neighbourhood of the New Infirmary, which could not possibly have been anticipated by Dr. Begg and others who were unfavourable to the removal.

CHAPTER LI.

CHARGE OF INCONSISTENCY, AND OF DESIRE TO RETURN TO THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH — PUBLIC SCHOOLS' BILL — HYMN QUESTION — POSTURES IN WORSHIP — ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY — PRESENTATION OF PORTRAIT.

By the time which we have now reached, the Union controversy was so engrossing the attention of the Free Church that scarcely any other subject was discussed with any spirit in her courts, or occupied any prominent place in the thoughts of her leading men. Whatever may have been the disadvantages of this state of matters—and they were great—it had this small compensating advantage, that it enables us to make short work of the public work of Dr. Begg during some years about this time. He went on steadily discharging his pastoral duties, and was not indifferent to the social and philanthropic objects in which he had always taken so deep an interest. But even these duties he discharged, and these objects he pursued, under a constant sense of depression, from a belief that he was looked upon askance by many of those with whom it had been his delight in better days to co-operate, and from a feeling that his personal influence now was rather prejudicial than favourable to the interests of any cause which he might support. Many a time did he express to me and others such a feeling. Then he had not the tact, which some men possess, of maintaining two or more currents of thought, and following two or more courses of action, at one and the same time. It was partly his strength, and partly his weakness, that whatever was the matter in hand was to him for the time all in all. Whether it was anti-Voluntaryism, or

church extension, or spiritual independence, or workmen's houses, or Romanism, or, as now, the Union controversy, it engrossed his thoughts and modified all his doings. Perhaps it was all the better, therefore, that at this time he was induced to turn aside into the Irish Church controversy. It is not surprising that he entered with ardour into this controversy. He regarded Mr. Gladstone's proposal as esentially Voluntary; he considered it as fitted ultimately to favour Romanism; he disliked it because it was advocated on what he considered to be Voluntary grounds, by those whom he believed to be, by the principles of the Free Church, committed to protest againt Voluntaryism not less than against Erastianism; and this defection from anti-Voluntaryism on the part of Free Churchmen he believed to be closely connected, as cause or effect, consciously or unconsciously on the part of those who were affected by it, with the Union movement.

I have already stated that he and the Reformation Society were subjected to much abuse, chiefly anonymous, on account of the position which he and the Secretary of the Society took up on this question. Of anonymous attacks he took no notice. But the matter assumed a position which required him to speak out. An overture was proposed in the Presbytery of Glasgow by Mr. Gault, proposing that the Free Church should again present the Claim of Rights to the Government, and plead that the claim should now be granted. Dr. Robert Buchanan opposed the transmission of the overture, and attempted to show that Mr. Gault's proposal was in opposition to views which had in former days been strongly stated by Dr. Begg. After quoting from a speech by Dr. Begg in the Assembly of 1853, Dr. Buchanan proceeded—

"Now before saying anything on that memorable speech, so fatally damaging to Mr. Gault's intended overture, I am bound to confess that recently some things have taken place which not unnaturally may have led him on the ice, and tempted him to assume that from the quarter in question he saw no

risk of catching such a fall. But there it is. He has got it now; and it has been waiting for him for the last fifteen years. When one thinks, indeed, of the stalwart arm which, by anticipation, inflicted this crushing blow, and when one has looked on the owner of that arm as he has lately appeared, the exclamation is apt to break involuntarily from one's lips—

> 'Hei mihi! qualis erat, quanto mutatus ab illo
> Hectore!'

Not, indeed, that Dr. Begg has become a pale and shadowy ghost. He is a giant still, and a valiant warrior too, but his voice no longer thunders against the subtle Greeks, and his chariot no longer chases them across the plain to their hollow ships. His weapons, alas!—and I say it in sincerest sorrow—are now too often turned against his former friends. But the sentiments I have here quoted give me, after all, an assurance with which I shall not easily part, that he and we will yet be fighting on the same side, and that his thoroughly practical and sagacious mind will cease to pursue what, for our day at least, is no better than a phantom of the past, and will address himself to the wiser and nobler task of dealing with the great living and breathing actualities of the present momentous time. In a word, that he will yet revert to his manly utterance of 1853, and instead of moving back to any fresh entanglement with statesmen and politicians, he will move right on in the course for which all the crying necessities of our country and the age, and the whole current of events, so loudly call—the cause of binding closer together the broken segments and divided sections of our simple and unpretending, but venerable and Scriptural, Presbyterian Church."

Dr. Begg immediately intimated his intention of replying to this speech. Apparently his intention was to answer through the newspapers. But eventually his reply took the form of a pamphlet.[1]

It is easy to "read between the lines" of Dr Buchanan's speech. His object was, not to show that Mr. Gault was in

[1] "Free Church Principles since the Disruption; with special reference to some remarks made by Dr. Buchanan at a late meeting of the Free Church Presbytery of Glasgow. By James Begg, D.D., Edinburgh. 1869."

opposition to Dr. Begg, but to show that Dr. Begg of 1869 was in opposition to Dr. Begg of 1853. In fact, there were about this time various surmises afloat that Dr. Begg was contemplating a return to the Establishment. Among the few papers which he preserved, and which are now in my possession, are two which bear on this point. One is a short note from a distinguished member of the Free Church, a constant friend of Dr. Begg, to the effect that a minister of the Free Church (now dead) had stated that another minister (still alive) had said that Dr. Crawford and another professor in the University were standing on the steps of the University, that Dr. Begg passed, that Dr. Crawford conversed with him, that on returning he said to the other professor, "We, the Established Church, might have him back if we liked." The other paper now before me is a letter by Dr. Crawford, apparently written at Dr. Begg's request, giving a flat denial to the whole statement. These documents, which are now before me in the manuscript, Dr. Begg inserted in the pamphlet to which I have just referred. Thereupon the minister who was said to have made the statement wrote to the newspapers denying that he had made it, but acknowledging that, on what he considered good authority, he had made a statement substantially the same as to Dr. Crawford's impression, that Dr. Begg might be induced to return to the Established Church, but that that impression was founded, not on his conversation with him, but on a conversation which Dr. Begg had had some time before with a minister of the Established Church (whose name is not given) in a railway carriage. To this Dr. Begg replied in the newspapers with considerable warmth—I might say indignation—which, if it were worth while, I think I could easily show to have been justifiable. But I have no wish to rake up the embers of these old controversies, further than is necessary to indicate the position which Dr. Begg occupied at this time, actively and passively. I have therefore suppressed the names of

those engaged in this matter, although these are given in the pamphlet and in the letters referred to. If any one should think it worth while to refer to the pamphlet or to the newspaper file, I think he will be convinced that Dr. Begg came out of this encounter with unsullied honour, and that his chief opponent was guilty of the indiscretion of repeating a story which he believed to be true, but which was not; and that the story as repeated by him was perverted and expanded as it passed from mouth to mouth.

On the 25th of February there was a field-day in the Presbytery of Edinburgh in the discussion of an overture proposed by Sir Henry Moncreiff. The main point of the overture was in the following sentence:—"Whereas it is of great moment at this time to make it manifest that the principles of the Free Church, though they warrant a Scriptural connection between Church and State, do not require or countenance the defence of any Church Establishment of which submission to the control of the civil power in matters spiritual is an essential principle." As this was virtually the assertion of a truism, Dr. Begg and his friends supported the overture, its transmission being seconded by Mr. Balfour of Holyrood, and unanimously agreed to. But while there was this agreement in the assertion of a truism, there was much divergence as to the application of it. Sir Henry Moncreiff very strongly commented on Dr. Begg's pamphlet, and went so far as to charge its author with "audacity" in making certain statements in it. Dr. Begg's reply was in substance thus:—"That he was as much opposed as any one to the Royal Supremacy, but that he did not consider that, in resisting the disestablishment of a Church, he was to be held as committed to the approval of all the particulars of the constitution of that Church." In support of that view he quoted some very telling statements made in former years by Dr. Chalmers, Dr. Charles Brown, and Dr. Robert Buchanan. With reference to Sir Henry's attack

on him, he merely said, "Sir Henry Moncreiff had very vehemently assailed him—he did not say unkindly at all, though he was beginning to think that he was becoming what Daniel O'Connell said of himself, about the best-abused man in the country."

I think I ought to make a general remark with reference to these discussions. They were necessarily of a somewhat personal character, each party endeavouring to fasten on the other a charge of inconsistency. Any one reading the reports of them now would suppose that there was a great deal of bitterness in them; but having been constantly present at them, and having sometimes taken a humble part in them, I can confidently state that they were almost entirely conducted in a way quite consistent with mutual respect on the part of opponents. I do not say that it is always so in the conduct of theological and ecclesiastical debates, but I am persuaded that a great deal of the sneering, with which all are familiar, at the bitterness of such debates, is unwarranted.

At the meeting of Commission in March Dr. Begg seconded a motion, made by Principal Douglas, that a special meeting of the Commission should be held for consideration of a Bill introduced into the House of Lords by the Duke of Argyll, on National Education in Scotland. On the subject of marriage with a deceased wife's sister he emphatically stated, that "it was of importance that they, the advocates of the measure, should be made to understand that this was a point which the Church could not abandon; that they held their principles as Scriptural principles; that these were embodied in the standards of the Scotch Churches; and that they must always resist any legislation of this nature."

The extraordinary meeting of the Commission was held on the 15th of March. Dr. Begg read a report of the Committee on the "Public Schools Bill," and made a long and able speech on the subject. The Commission were unanimous in

expressing a general approval of the Bill, and also in stating several amendments as essential to its being satisfactory. The subject was again discussed in the Presbytery of Edinburgh on the last day of March, Dr. Begg taking a leading part in the discussion. Both in the Commission and in the Presbytery he dwelt specially on three points—the propriety of a recognition in the Bill of the religious element, justice to be done to the Free Church in the transference of her schools, and a more satisfactory dealing with the parochial schools. I may so far anticipate as to state that, when the Education Act of Lord Advocate Young was actually passed, the second of these conditions was flagrantly violated, and that it was mainly through Dr. Begg's exertions that the wrong was afterwards partially redressed.

At a special meeting of the Presbytery, on the 15th of April, Dr. Begg proposed an overture on the subject of hymns, merely asking that the Assembly should not give a hasty assent to the report which it was understood their committee was to lay before them in favour of the adoption of a Hymnal. He also proposed that the Presbytery should petition Parliament against the endowment of Maynooth under the form of compensation proposed by Mr. Gladstone's Bill. Dr. Candlish moved, in opposition, that the Presbytery should express satisfaction that the Bill proposed the abolition of the endowment of Maynooth. It will be seen that the difference turned on a definition. Hitherto the "endowment" of Maynooth had consisted in an annual Parliamentary grant, with occasional loans for buildings, &c. Could it with propriety be said that the "endowment" would cease by the commutation of the grant into the gift of a capital sum equal to twenty years' purchase of it, and by the wiping out of a loan of £20,000? Dr. Candlish's amendment was carried by a majority of 13 (24–11).

About this time it was very much the practice of Dr. Begg's opponents to quote him against himself. We have

seen that Dr. Buchanan set the example in the Presbytery of Glasgow. It was followed by Dr. Rainy and Sir Henry Moncreiff in the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale. I had moved the transmission of an overture on the subject of National Education, and had expressed my conviction that religious education in State-endowed schools would not be allowed by Voluntaries. Dr. Rainy answered me by reference to Dr. Begg's earlier action in the matter. Now I have again and again had occasion to state my belief that Dr. Begg's views on the subject of National Education underwent an important change, and therefore it was of little consequence to me that Dr. Begg of the past could be quoted against me, when Dr. Begg was present to support me, as he did in an earnest and telling speech. At the risk of being accused of wearisome reiteration, I must repeat what I have again and again said in substance, that his views as to what education ought to be—that it ought to be national, and that it ought to be religious—were never changed, but that his opinion as to what Voluntaryism is underwent several modifications. In the early Paisley days he regarded it as unmingled and unmitigated evil. For some time after the Disruption he thought that the good which was in the men who held the system would to a great extent neutralise the evil of the system which they held. Latterly he lost this faith. At the same meeting of Synod Dr. Begg moved a petition to Parliament in opposition to the Bill for legalising marriage with the sister of a deceased wife. His motion was seconded by Dr. Rainy in a most admirable speech. Indeed I may say in passing, what I have often said in private, that in the endless discussion of this subject Dr. Rainy has been, of all opponents of the measure, the most effective.

In the Assembly of 1869 Dr. Begg did not make any particularly notable speech. Even on the Union question he took only a small part in the discussion. It was in this Assembly that the Hymn question took definite shape. On

this matter Dr. Begg acted throughout a consistent and quite intelligible part. He always contended that in public worship the Church has no right to adopt any Hymnal other than the inspired Psalter. I thought, and still think, that this is a very doubtful position. But I had not a particle of sympathy with some of the arguments used on the other side. In due time a hymn-book was prepared, and permission was given to congregations to adopt it when it could be done without marring peace and harmony. "Permissive legislation" is proverbially dangerous; and I do not think that this permission has been an exception to the usual experience. In many cases the mere raising of the question has created dispeace. The adoption of the Hymnal in some cases and its non-adoption in others have given dissatisfaction to minorities. Holding the view that he did as to the exclusive obligation to sing the Psalms in the public worship of God, Dr. Begg could do no otherwise than he did, in opposing the permission of the use of "uninspired hymns."

So closely connected was the Hymn movement with the introduction of innovations in posture, that this may be the proper place to refer in a few sentences, and once for all, to Dr. Begg's action with regard to these. From time immemorial it had been the custom in the Presbyterian Churches—a custom admittedly derived from the remotest Christian antiquity—to stand at prayer. As singing and prayer generally came together in the service, the standing at prayer almost necessarily carried with it that the congregation sat while they sang. In many instances the practice was adopted of standing while singing, and this as necessarily carried with it the practice of sitting during prayer, since the pews of our churches were not arranged with a view to kneeling. These changes Dr. Begg strenuously opposed, and that on the twofold ground that sitting, even with the head bent down, is an irreverent attitude in prayer, and that the change was a step in the progress of innovation, a gratuitous change

whose motive was, at least in greater or smaller part, a mere spirit of restlessness, or a desire to conform our forms of worship to the lax and ever-relaxing tastes of the times. He was often very unfairly accused of treating matters of posture as matters of principle. This he did not do. But he did regard the introduction of innovations out of a mere spirit of unrest as a violation of principle. If it were admitted that he made too much of these changes in so strenuously opposing them, surely those made more of them who insisted on their introduction.

From his speech in this Assembly on National Education I must extract a characteristic passage :—

"He regretted that the measure[1] was not of a nature to secure enthusiastic support from any quarter. He thought it was always a mistake in statesmanship, as in anything else, to advance a measure which does not ensure enthusiastic support from any quarter, because it raises up opposition as much from one quarter as from another, and at the same time there is no reserve of enthusiasm to carry it through. He heard a remark in London which he thought a childish one, though it came from a senator. He said he considered it a good sign that nobody approved of the Bill. This remark reminded him of a story told him by Dr. Edgar of Belfast, of a congregation of his countrymen in their choice of a minister. On expressing to one of their number his surprise at their choice, the man said they had chosen him because nobody recommended him. They had had a previous minister who had come to them with a mass of certificates, and had not turned out well, so they were determined not to make the same mistake a second time."

This is, and was evidently intended to be, too broadly

[1] One of the Bills of Lord-Advocate Moncreiff, regarding whom I may be permitted to say, that he has not got the credit which rightly belongs to him for his persistent efforts in this great cause. He had to contend with immense difficulties in dealing with conflicting views and conflicting interests ; and I do not know that there was ever an instance of a more steadfast determination to do the best that could be done in unfavourable circumstances than he exhibited.—T. S.

stated. But in its substance it is a fair protest against a temporising policy. Yet when men have to do not only with differing views, but with opposite interests, and it is impossible to please everybody and displease nobody, it may sometimes be better to partly please and partly displease all than wholly to please some and wholly displease others.

On the 8th of June 1862 Dr. Begg was examined at great length by a Select Committee of the House of Commons on pauperism in Scotland. I think I have heard him say that it was in some measure at his instance—indirectly, of course—that the Committee was appointed, and it was probably at his own request that he was cited as a witness. His examination lasted three hours, and in the course of it he had opportunity of stating his strong views as to the injustice done to Scotland by the "Law of Settlement" as it then was, which allowed an unlimited influx of immigrants from Ireland into Scotland, and permitted them to obtain "settlement" there, so that those who became paupers were chargeable on the Scottish rates. Nor did he fail to enter his protest against the obstacles which prevented the acquisition of good houses by working men, and against the facilities for obtaining drink. The *Daily Review* of the 11th of June had an intelligent and discriminating leader on the subject of Dr. Begg's evidence. Its opening sentences were these:—"Dr. Begg's evidence before the Poor-Law Committee is certainly the most valuable—we had almost said the only valuable—evidence which this Committee has yet got. Nor is it the least unsatisfactory indication of the working of this, as of most Parliamentary Committees, to note the doubtful questioning to which the witness is subjected. For instance, Dr. Begg's evidence is valuable almost throughout; but where it ceases to be valuable it is when the members of Committee enter on a sort of inferior cross-questioning, after the plan of some lower courts."

An unpleasant matter occurred at this time. Mr. M'Naught,

a Free Church minister in Glasgow, published a pamphlet on the insufficiency of the incomes of such of the ministers of the Free Church as were not on the "platform" of the equal dividend. To this pamphlet Dr. Begg contributed a preface. In the course of a debate in the House of Lords on the disestablishment of the Irish Church, the Archbishop of Canterbury referred to this pamphlet, citing it in proof of the inability of voluntary contributions to make an adequate provision for the support of the ministry. This was altogether an illegitimate use to make of the pamphlet, whose thesis was not that the contributions to the fund were inadequate, but that the distribution of it was faulty. I have no doubt that the Archbishop was unconscious of making an illegitimate use of Mr. M'Naught's statements. But so it was. In the highest place in the land the Sustentation Fund had been stigmatised as a failure, professedly on the authority of Mr. M'Naught and Dr. Begg; and this could not be tolerated. Letter after letter appeared in the newspapers; and the subject was brought up in the August Commission. Dr. Begg's vindication was, I think, complete. A few sentences may be extracted from his speech:—

"I am quite confident that there is no substantial difference of opinion among us in so far as the Sustentation Fund is regarded as a most marvellous result of God's goodness and of great liberality. But I find it necessary, in consequence of what Dr. Buchanan has just stated, to make a few words of explanation. He has referred to what the Archbishop of Canterbury said, viz., 'that the Free Church Sustentation Fund was a failure.' Now I beg to say that that statement is entirely the property of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and that Dr. Buchanan is entitled to belabour his Grace to his heart's content. But it is not a statement for which any minister of this Church is responsible, and least of all for which Dr. Buchanan's co-presbyter, who is now absent, Mr. M'Naught, is responsible; for Mr. M'Naught, in the pamphlet to which reference is made, speaks as strongly about

the Sustentation Fund as Dr. Buchanan can do, and is the very last to speak of it as a failure."

In the same meeting of the Commission there was a keen discussion as to the attitude of the United Presbyterians towards religious instruction. Undoubtedly the speakers on both sides, if they looked with one eye at the subject of National Education, squinted with the other at the question of Union, which was not formally under discussion. This could scarcely have been otherwise. There was an almost stormy discussion on the same subject in the November Commission, to which it is unnecessary to make any special reference.

At that Commission Dr. Begg called attention to the Roman Council, which was summoned to meet on the 8th of December following, and proposed the following deliverance:— "The attention of the Commission having been called to the fact, that a so-called General Council has been summoned by the Pope to meet at Rome on the 8th December next, the Commission agree that the calling of such a Council is an evidence of the unchangeable nature of the Romish system, and is likely to lead to new developments of Romish superstition and idolatry, and renewed claims of intolerance; and they call on all the ministers of this Church to take advantage of the occasion, by expounding to the people the true nature of Popery as opposed to Protestant truth, and by engaging with the people in earnest prayer that the deluded votaries of the Romish Antichrist may be set free from their bondage, and that the man of sin may be overthrown, and that the kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost may prevail." This motion was seconded by Dr. Buchanan, and was adopted unanimously. Of this subject of the Vatican Council a manifesto was put forth and circulated. The thirty signatures to it are arranged alphabetically, but from internal evidence I should judge that Dr. Begg was its author.

There is no little gratification in being able to close a too ecclesiastical chapter with reference to a scene in which personal and pastoral elements prevail over the ecclesiastical and controversial, and Dr. Begg appears not in armour of proof but in the garb of peace. On the 27th December 1869, the congregation of Newington presented Dr. Begg with a portrait of himself, painted by Sir Daniel Macnee, and Mrs. Begg with a massive silver tea-urn. The chair was occupied by Mr. Lang of the Commercial Bank; the portrait was presented by Mr. Graham of Moray House, and the urn by Mr. John Dick; Dr. Begg returned thanks; Mr. Cameron proposed a vote of thanks to the artist, and so the proceedings ended.

With a "sitter" like Dr. Begg, with his "pawky" humour, and an artist like Sir Daniel Macnee, the most wonderful pourer forth of Scottish stories, the sittings must have been a rich treat. The portrait is worthy of the artist and the subject.

It is interesting to notice that the four gentlemen who took part in the proceedings of that evening are still with us after nearly twenty years; Messrs. Lang, Graham, and Cameron being elders in Newington, and Mr. Dick having deemed it his duty to join another body of Presbyterians, carrying with him the undiminished respect of Dr. Begg, the office-bearers, and the congregation of Newington.

CHAPTER LII.

NATIONAL EDUCATION—HYMNS—SIR JAMES SIMPSON—ELECTION OF MINISTERS—SUSTENTATION FUND—FRANCO-GERMAN WAR—MR. BELL OF NEWCASTLE—MR. GLADSTONE AND THE POPE.

Dr. Begg entered on the year 1870 by taking part in an agitation for the amendment of the Scottish Poor-Law. On the 5th of January, he presided at the delivery of a lecture on the subject by Bailie Lewis, a man of enlightened zeal on all social questions. In returning thanks to the lecturer, he ventilated a subject in which he took much interest, and which by constant iteration he brought to a successful issue—that of getting, in the decennial census, a return of the number of apartments in the houses. Mainly through his exertions a beginning had been made in the census of 1861. The result of the return was appalling. By substituting authoritative statements for vague conjectures as to the social condition of our people, it contributed materially to the amendment of a deplorable state of matters—an amendment which still requires to be carried much further. Dr. Begg was one of the chief speakers at a public meeting called by the Lord Provost on the same subject, and received from the other speakers cordial acknowledgment of the value of his services regarding this matter.

A special meeting of the Commission of the Free Church Assembly was held on the 9th of February for considering the subject of the Lord Advocate's (Young) National Education Bill. The state of the case stood thus. All the members desired a national rather than a denominational system of education. None were quite satisfied with the Lord

Advocate's Bill. But with one party the *desire* was stronger than the *dissatisfaction;* with another the dissatisfaction preponderated over the desire. The latter party were ably led by Dr. Nixon of Montrose, a man who for the good he has done, and for the evil he has resisted, could hardly be named even by one who did not enjoy his personal friendship, as I do, without a passing tribute of admiration and veneration. Dr. Nixon stated with crushing force the objections to the Bill, and moved, "That the Commission of Assembly . . . declare at this juncture that no Bill for the settlement of education in Scotland can be accepted by the Free Church which proposes to exclude religion from the schools, or proposes to restrict it to certain hours, or fails to provide adequate security that the system of religious instruction hitherto in use in the parochial and Free Church schools shall be continued in all national schools." Dr. Nixon's motion was seconded by Mr. Kidston of Ferniegair, another man who has done noble service to his Church and his country. A counter-motion having been moved by Dr. Rainy, Dr. Begg proposed an amendment, going somewhat more into detail than the motion of Dr. Nixon, but agreeing substantially with it. In supporting his amendment he cleared his ground with reference to a point that I have had occasion to refer to again and again.

"He admitted that the main security in regard to religious instruction must always be with the people of the country. He did not admit that there was no advantage to be gained by having a recognition in the Bill that there was no intention to innovate on the practice hitherto in vogue. It had been admitted by Dr. Rainy that there was great importance in that; and he was aware that in their interviews with the members of the Government in London this point as to recognising religion was pressed upon them; and it was clearly stated that this was a thing which the Church was most desirous to obtain. One naturally asked why they were so indifferent about it now, when they changed their minds, and for what reason they had changed sides? It was said that

there was no advantage in this recognition. He maintained that there was a very great advantage. When the question was discussed twenty years ago that element was not raised, as it was admitted on all hands that religion should be incorporated with education. Now, however, that question was raised, and it was one of the main questions in connection with National Education. There was a large party in England, and a considerable party in Scotland, including those who held that the State ought not to support a school in which religion and education were blended together, and who held that the teaching in the schools should be kept separate from religious instruction. It therefore became a question of material importance: Were they to plead, or to be allowed to plead, that it was intended on their part to meet this view, and intended to effect a revolution in the use and wont of Scotland in the matter of religious instruction? If they abandoned that now, by assenting to a Bill that did not contain anything on the subject, they would do a wrong thing, for they would give up a claim which they had a right to prefer."

Dr. Nixon withdrew his motion in favour of Dr. Begg's; but Dr. Rainy's was carried by a majority of 23 (49–26). Of course a vote in which only seventy-five members took part was not in itself of much consequence; but it was probably indicative of the sentiments of the members generally. Many were desirous to get an educational measure at any price; and some, I fear, were affected, consciously or unconsciously, with undefined Voluntary views.

At the meeting of the Presbytery in February, Dr. Begg introduced the endless subject of the "deceased wife's sister," characterising as incestuous the marriages which it was proposed to legalise. He was supported by Dr. Candlish and Sir Henry Moncreiff, and his motion to petition against the Bill was unanimously agreed to.

At the same meeting of Presbytery there was a lively discussion on the Hymn question. Formally the motion (of Professor MacGregor) was only an overture that the Assembly should take no definitive action for the introduction of hymns

without submitting it to the Presbyteries under the Barrier Act. But the discussion of the question naturally diverged into a statement of reasons for and against the use of hymns in public worship. Even the strongest advocates of their use will scarcely dispute the following statement by Dr. Begg:—"In his opinion these hymns contained a saccharine sort of matter; they had an utter want of the grandeur and boldness to be found in the Psalms." I may perhaps be excused for stating here that, while I never agreed with Dr. Begg in holding that the Church is not entitled to sing any uninspired compositions, I was always in perfect sympathy with him in deprecating the introduction of such compositions. I was in favour of allowing our congregations to have them if they would have them, while I thought that the desire for them was an unhealthy symptom. I was therefore generally obliged to vote against my friend on this question. But on the present occasion I was able to support him cordially.

In the month of May Dr. Begg was the chief speaker in a meeting in London in connection with the English branch of the Scottish Reformation Society. We read that on rising to speak, he "was received with rounds of Kentish fire!" His speech was an eloquent protest—alas! too little heeded—against the apathy of Protestants as to the progress of Romanism. "It was well known," he said in the course of his speech, "that Rome knows nothing of toleration. On the contrary, she claimed supremacy by whatever means it might be gained; . . . and if we allow her to triumph, woe be to us and all the spiritual interests of the land. The opponents of this Protestant movement were accustomed to say, it was incredible that such a system as Romanism should prevail in this country in the nineteenth century. At one time he himself thought that no man of powerful intellect could be a Romanist; but he had since found that powerful intellects were subjected by Rome, and that the very people who

considered that result an impossibility were the most likely to fall into the Roman snare."

At a meeting of Presbytery, on the 11th of May, Dr. Begg referred in high terms to the late Sir James Y. Simpson, and proposed "that the Presbytery should, as a body, perform the melancholy duty of attending his funeral." This was cordially agreed to. This small matter were not worth mentioning, were it not as showing the mistake into which many fell, who did not know Dr. Begg, of supposing that he carried ecclesiastical differences into the relations of social life. Sir James Simpson took no part in ecclesiastical controversy, but his views were certainly opposite to those of Dr. Begg. Yet it never entered into Dr. Begg's mind that this opposition should prevent his being the first to propose, that a tribute should be paid to the memory of one who had been honoured of God to lessen so materially the sufferings of humanity.

At the meeting of the General Assembly in May, Dr. Begg took the lead in the discussion on National Education. In the course of the debate both he and I, who seconded his motion, were pretty severely dealt with.

In the proceedings of the Assembly of this year Dr. Begg took an active part. In the discussion of a question, of no great moment in itself, of a disputed settlement, he stated very clearly the views which he always held respecting the rights and duties of majorities and minorities respectively in such cases—views which merit permanent record. "While he concurred with Dr. Wilson that at the end of the day the majority must always be held to be the congregation, it was of great importance, in his view, that this House should give forth a very distinct opinion to the effect, that it is very desirable to have no divisions at all in congregations, if that could possibly be avoided. A congregation was a unit of the Church, and it was as undesirable to have that unit divided as it was to have a family divided; and every means ought

to be exhausted to bring about harmony, and, if possible, unanimity. He thought it of vast importance that all parties should understand that it was not merely their own individual choice that ought to be considered, but that there was another element that should enter into their consideration—the securing of mutual harmony, of the good feeling of others as well as themselves; and if there should be a man in the Church that could combine all interests and all sympathies, it was extremely important that they should look out for such a man. It was important that majorities should understand that an election of a minister was not a political choice, but a choice to be conducted in a Christian spirit, with an earnest desire for mutual edification, and that everything should be done for obtaining a man that could combine all interests."

The subject is one of great and permanent importance. It is true that the cases of disputed elections are few—much fewer than is generally believed. Every one that occurs is largely discussed, while multitudes of elections are conducted, as without dispute, so without further discussion. Still it is extremely desirable that there should be no disputes at all, or that they should be terminated by mutual concessions. It is very difficult—perhaps impossible—to lay down any rules which would ensure in every case the right result. To say that the majority must always get their man might lead to an unfair treatment of minorities. To say that they are not to get their man would encourage minorities to persist in what might be wilful opposition. To enact anything corresponding to a *jus devolutum* would probably alienate both majorities and minorities. It is evident that Dr. Begg felt these difficulties, and therefore his advice amounts to little more than this, that all parties should act in a kindly and Christian way. And perhaps this is about all that can be said on the matter.

The discussion on National Education in this Assembly

was not without importance, but unhappily it was little more than a repetition of that in the Presbytery of Edinburgh. The motions were made by Dr. Begg, seconded by me; and by Sir Henry Moncreiff, seconded by Dr. Rainy. The report in the Blue Book gives eleven pages to the speeches of the Edinburgh members and two to those of all other speakers!

I wish I could give in full Dr. Begg's speech on the Sustentation Fund; but I must restrict myself to a few sentences. On the subject of systematic or proportional giving he said:—"He also very cordially agreed with Mr. Maclagan that the theory, which he believed to be entirely Scriptural, of proportional giving, should be pressed upon the consciences of their people more than it had been. Of course he did not hold that there was absolute rule on the subject laid down under the New Testament dispensation. He believed that the Old Testament regulations as to giving were removed in so far as they implied express stipulation; but he thought that the general principle, that a man ought to give the first proportion of his income to God, was a principle of universal application." With respect to the place and province of national support to the Church his deliverance was weighty and sound:—"If a man was of opinion that the Church of Christ was likely to come to an end for the want of support, that man had a want of faith, and he had no sympathy whatever with such a man; or if any one thought that, because the kings and nations of the world threw over the Church of Christ it would cease to be supported, he had no sympathy whatever with that man. For he believed that the Church of Christ would stand and flourish amid all opposition, and that the nations of the world were more indebted to the Church of Christ than the Church was to them, and that they had far more interest in helping the Church of Christ than the Church had in securing their support. The Church of Christ had cause in no measure to be alarmed because they ceased to support it.

He believed that Christ would support His Church, but not that He would support it and make it ultimately to triumph *merely* by the contributions of individual Christians, and that He would ultimately so turn the hearts of kings and of nations that those nations would bring their honour and glory to the cause of Christ." At this time there was a general belief that some of the people who were opposed to the Union movement were withholding their contributions from the Sustentation Fund; and it is probable that there were a few isolated cases of that kind. Dr. Begg therefore closed his speech with a strong disclaimer of any sympathy with such withholding, and an earnest appeal "that the Sustentation Fund should not only be maintained, but that it should be increased as far as possible, as the means of upholding the ministry of the Word and sacraments among them."

Dr. Begg was in "great form" in opposing the Hymn movement. From his speech it can be pretty clearly ascertained what was his position on that subject. "He was prepared to sing any inspired song;" that is, I suppose, anything that was inspired *as a song.* This, I presume, would include, besides the Book of Psalms, Exod. xv., Numb. xxi. 17, 18, Deut. xxxii., Isa. v., and the whole of the Song of Solomon, and a few Scriptural passages which, though not designated as songs, are essentially such. But would it not include also the whole of the Pentateuch, or at all events the whole Book of Deuteronomy? For was it not this whole series of books, or at all events the last of them, that is by God Himself denominated a song? (Deut. xxxi. 19, 22). The fact appears to me to be, that Dr. Begg, led by his right instincts to protest against the singing of namby-pamby hymns, and by his experience to conclude that the descent to namby-pambyism is very usual—holding by the adage which affirms the evil of the first step—sometimes advocated a good cause by the use of arguments which were neither

logical nor tenable. His judgments were right, and in the aggregate his reasons must have been right also; but into the right aggregate there might enter weak and even wrong elements, and in the statement of the reasons, especially when they had to be stated controversially, he was apt to assign a disproportionate value to the weaker. It had been well for our Churches if they had adopted his counsel to "stick to the Psalms," although it might not be always supported by incontrovertible arguments. I have understood that, before the controversy about hymns began, Dr. Begg occasionally "gave out" a paraphrase in his church. But of course he soon saw that this was incompatible with the position which he occupied.

The kindred question of instrumental music was brought up by Dr. Begg himself in the same Assembly. The English Presbyterian Church had sanctioned the introduction of instrumental music into their congregations. A number of members of Assembly, with Dr. Begg at their head, presented an overture to the effect, that this was a reason for discontinuing the relation of mutual eligibility between the Free and English Presbyterian Churches. In moving to this effect, Dr. Begg forcibly vindicated the sound Presbyterian principle that nothing is admissible in the worship of God which is not prescribed by Divine authority, in opposition to the view that anything is admissible which is not forbidden by such authority. It is noticeable that a few years before Dr. Candlish, and especially Dr. Buchanan, had taken precisely the ground which Dr. Begg occupied now; Dr. Buchanan in 1858 having stated in terms, that he was prepared to hold catholic communion with a Church which allowed instrumental music, but not *such* communion as subsisted between the Free Church and the English Presbyterians. Dr. Candlish, in moving a negative to Dr. Begg's motion, frankly admitted that, while he held the same strong views as he ever did in opposition to instrumental music, he was

not now prepared, as he once was, to make the introduction of such music a ground for a revision of the relations between the two Churches. Dr. Begg closed his speech by reference to an anecdote which he often told with great relish:—"He would say to their friends in England, What was their purpose? Did they imagine that they would extend Presbyterianism in England by such a process as this? They would scare away the true-hearted Scotch Presbyterians who went into England ardent lovers of true Presbyterianism. Very Hebrews of the Hebrews were they when they crossed the Border, like the old Scottish regiment which, when inadvertently taken to a Puseyite Church in Dublin turned at the door, and the band struck up—

'This is no my ain hoose,
I ken by the biggin' o't.'

This was very expressive of the Scotch Presbyterian mind, as their friends would discover. This attempt was in every way a serious blunder and mistake." The motion and counter-motion having been moved and seconded, and when a vote was about to be taken, Dr. Begg consented, on the recommendation of two of his supporters, Dr. Nixon and Mr. W. Balfour, to withdraw his motion, on the ground that there was not time for a full discussion of the subject. The *Pall Mall Gazette* took up the subject in a good-natured quizzical way, having, of course, no sympathy with Dr. Begg, but opposing instrumental music on the ground of the intolerable badness of much of it! *Punch* also took up the matter, but with more than his usual bitterness, and less than his usual fun. Dr. Begg in this Assembly moved the adoption of the Report of the Committee on Temperance, of which his friend Mr. Kidston was convener, and spoke on the subject of Sabbath Observance. At an early diet of Assembly he was appointed convener of a small committee on the Census, and at one of the last diets he gave in an important report, evidently drawn up by himself.

On the 16th of June a public meeting was held of the "Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor"—an Association whose unquestionable good intentions have only gone to show the extreme difficulty of the work which it has undertaken. Dr. Begg was one of the speakers, and took occasion to state his oft-stated views as to pauperism and poor-laws. "He cordially concurred in the principle of punishing the drunkard. He thought no man had a right to become a drunkard, and saddle others with the support of his family, which he ought to support himself. It was a sad delusion to think that more and more money would quench pauperism. They might as well expect to quench fire by throwing oil upon it." Perfectly true and beyond question. All of us will agree that the drunkard ought to be punished. Some of us, without being specially bloodthirsty, would have a certain "stern joy" in wielding the cat ourselves. But what punishment that we can inflict on him will feed and clothe and educate his children? It is my duty to punish the drunkard. But it is my duty too not to let children die whom I can keep alive. How are these duties to be made to harmonise? Of course the best thing would be the suppression of drunkenness. But how is that to be effected? and *en attendant*, what is to be done?

At the Commission in August there was submitted a remarkably well-written memorial from a remote Presbytery (Fordyce) with reference to the Franco-German war, then raging. It prayed the Commission "to correspond with other Churches, both home and foreign, and invite them to bow devoutly before the Lord of Hosts, and pray Him to stay the ravages of war." Dr. Begg spoke with great earnestness on the subject, and laid down important principles; first, as to the terrible evil of war; and secondly, as to its being the scourge in God's hand upon guilty nations.

"He did not intend to enter on the discussion of views in regard to which they might not agree; but he had a very

profound conviction that they were on the eve of very solemn and startling events, and according to his reading of prophecy, he was thoroughly convinced that this war, breaking out, as it did, at the very time when the declaration of the infallibility of the Pope was made at Rome, that that was in connection with the final overthrow of the mystical Babylon, and that the final overthrow of that system would involve calamities to Europe, and, more or less, to those who had been mixed up with that system. That was his opinion, and in the very face of such a manifestation as they had seen. It was very clear that the views which had been put abroad —and put abroad for years—in reference to human nature, as if human nature were better than the Word of God declared it to be, and so much better that we need not anticipate dreadful wars in the future—that these views had received a flat and emphatic contradiction by what had just taken place. Two of the most polished, literary, and scientific nations in the world had broken out suddenly, and without any apparent reason, into open war, and the only effect of civilisation and science seemed to be to enable them to destroy one another more scientifically and more rapidly than otherwise they could have done."

It is interesting to find that, although this subject was introduced immediately after a very keen set-to between Dr. Begg and Dr. Rainy on a point connected with the Union question, Dr. Rainy seconded Dr. Begg's motion, and said that he hoped that the remarks in his powerful and impressive speech would be duly considered.

Strange it is, and sad as strange, that men will lean upon the broken reed of civilisation and the march of intellect, as if that were adequate to the healing of the disease of humanity. In connection with the opening of the Great Exhibition in 1851, we were told, in orations and odes innumerable, that war was to be thenceforth an impossibility; and since then we have had the Crimean war, and the Indian Mutiny, and the American civil war, and the Franco-German war, besides Abyssinian and Ashantee and Egyptian wars, and periodic revolutions in Spain and the minor states. It may be doubted

whether in any thirty years since the beginning of the world there has been more human blood shed in war than has been in the first thirty years of the second half of the nineteenth century.

This was the subject which was for the time in the ascendant in Dr. Begg's mind; and on the 17th of November he delivered a lecture to a large audience in the Glasgow City Hall on "The War and its Lessons." It would not have been Dr. Begg if he had not regarded the *war* as teaching *lessons* respecting Highland clearings, emigration, the bothy system, pauperism, and crime:—

"People said that it was impossible there should be an invasion of this country; but let them ask any military man, and he would tell them that there was no impossibility in it. Supposing, then, that it was possible, what was the state of this country? Any one who had examined the internal state of our society must be prepared to admit that that society was rotten at the core, and that the country stood in great danger in the event he had supposed. Look, for example, upon our standing army. Having no feeling but one of gratitude to that army, he had no doubt that the Prussian system was more calculated to secure the safety of the nation; and what was singular, it was more in accordance with the practice of the Jewish and other nations, as they found it described in the Bible. That standing army of ours should not supersede the training of the entire population to defend our country, if the country should ever require defence. What had we been doing in this country? We had been driving men out of it, imagining that in doing so we were acting wisely. He saw in the North American colonies many of these noble Sutherland men, 10,000 of whom were to be found on the banks of the St. Lawrence. And what had taken their place? Why, 2,000,000 of the acres of Scotland—and one-tenth part of the entire surface—were devoted to deer. They would make poor soldiers! And if the day of trial came, they would ask for the Highlanders in vain. . . . And what was the condition of the population in some of the best-cultivated districts in Scotland? They lived in those wretched bothies, huts worse than Indian wig-

wams. The truth is, the monastic system in its worst form prevailed in these districts, and the family system was the only strength and power of a country. Destroy the family system, and the country was incapacitated for making resistance against an enemy. Passing on to speak of the condition of our large cities, the lecturer noticed the social degradation, the pauperism and crime that existed, and the drinking habits that prevailed among the people, and contended that there was something entirely wrong in the internal state of our country, and that we had much to learn from the present war to set our house in order. . . . Men must have something to fight for, and patriotism starved upon such a state of things as existed in many parts of our native land. In concluding, he directed the attention of his audience to that which was far higher than all these things, to the necessity of seeking that righteousness which exalteth a nation. The grand question before the world was, Who was to reign over it, Christ or Antichrist? And the nation or kingdom that would not serve Christ would be utterly destroyed."

About this time Dr. Begg was assailed in a very silly way on a matter which arose out of the Union controversy. Referring to the declaration of the United Presbyterian Church, that they are not bound by anything in the Confession of Faith which "teaches, or may be supposed to teach, intolerant principles in religion," he had quoted a statement in a letter by Mr. Bell, a United Presbyterian minister in Newcastle, and showed that, according to that letter, a man might hold any view whatever and retain his place in the ministry of the United Presbyterian Church, on merely declaring that the opposite doctrine, as taught in the Confession of Faith, is intolerant. Mr. Bell was indignant, and wrote a letter to the newspapers, which Dr. Begg answered; but Mr. Bell did not see his answer. He therefore sent to the newspapers the following letter, addressed to Sir Henry Moncreiff:—

"DEAR SIR,—I believe you are Clerk to the Edinburgh Presbytery of the Free Church. It is under this impression that I address this letter to you.

"The Rev. Dr. Begg, in his speech on the Union question, is represented in the *Daily Review* as saying, 'Mr. Bell of Newcastle had published a letter in which he said he was entitled to hold even that the doctrine of election was intolerant.'

"By a letter in the *Review* I challenged Dr. Begg to produce any letter of mine justifying his statement. After waiting for some time, and finding no notice taken of my first letter, I wrote again, saying that 'should Dr. Begg produce no proof or offer no apology, it would be necessary for me to consider whether redress for the injury done me in the presence of the whole Church should not be sought before the courts of his Church or the courts of his country.'

"This second letter appeared in the *Review*, December the 12th. It is now the 24th, and Dr. Begg remains silent, as if the character and the usefulness of a brother minister were things about which he felt no concern.

"In these circumstances, I feel myself shut up to complain to the Presbytery of which Dr. Begg is a member, and my object in writing to you is to ask when your Presbytery meets, and to whom I should address my complaint—to the Moderator or to the Clerk? If to the Moderator, please say who is Moderator. So far from saying that the doctrine of election was intolerant, I had distinctly stated, in the June number of the *Presbyterian*, 'that the word intolerant cannot be applied to anything which God teaches, or to anything which God does.' How any man, with this statement before his eyes, could charge me with holding and teaching that the doctrine of election is intolerant, is to me amazing.

"I have several reasons for making the above inquiries through the papers rather than through the post; but I need not trouble you with stating them.—I am, dear sir, yours sincerely,

G. BELL."

As I find, on reference to the *Almanac*, that Mr. Bell was ordained so long ago as 1834, I am exceedingly unwilling to express my estimate of this letter. It was, I presume, intended as a *jeu d'esprit*. Probably its author thought it a very clever one. I think most readers will regard it as a very silly one. That it could not be seriously intended is manifest, from the fact of its being sent "through the papers rather than

through the post." It is very difficult to believe that Mr. Bell really supposed Sir Henry Moncreiff to be the Clerk of the Presbytery of Edinburgh. Perhaps he thought that this supposition gave a finer point to the joke. His argument is a fine specimen of what the logicians call "reasoning in a circle." The question is, whether the doctrine of election is taught in the Word of God. It cannot, says Mr. Bell, be taught in the Word of God if it be intolerant. But it cannot be intolerant if it is taught in that Word. So far as appears from his letter, Mr. Bell gives no answer to the question, whether the doctrine is taught in the Word of God or not. Dr. Begg replied by simply stating that he had answered Mr. Bell's first letter immediately. Mr. Bell expressed his regret that he had not seen Dr. Begg's letter, and so the matter took end.

About the end of this year there was exhibited a special phase of Mr. Gladstone's inexplicable attitude with respect to the Pope and Romanism. He received a memorial from the inhabitants of Stradbally, transmitted by Mr. E. Dease, M.P., expressing their desire "that Her Majesty's Government may see fit to use such diplomatic intervention as may secure to the Pope the continuance of such a temporal sovereignty as will protect him in the discharge of his spiritual duties, together with an adequate income." In reply to Mr. Dease Mr. Gladstone said— . . . "But Her Majesty's Government consider all that relates to the adequate support of the dignity of the Pope, and to his personal freedom and independence in the discharge of his spiritual functions, to be legitimate matter for their notice." This matter was brought before the Presbytery of Edinburgh by Dr. Candlish, who stated that he had written to Mr. Gladstone, and had received from him a copy of a letter which he had addressed to a friend in explanation of that to Mr. Dease. This letter he (Mr. Gladstone) had thought of publishing, but had thought it better to reserve his explanation till the meeting of Parliament.

Although Dr. Candlish admitted that the unpublished letter showed that the language used in the published one was "capable of a more favourable interpretation than was generally believed it could have," he considered that "that did not relieve them from the obligation of bearing a strong and emphatic testimony against the principle which apparently the letter to Mr. Dease contained." He accordingly moved an admirable motion to this effect. The motion was seconded by Dr. Begg, supported by Sir Henry Moncreiff, Dr. Rainy, and Mr. Arnot, and unanimously adopted.

At the same meeting of Presbytery, Dr. Begg moved the appointment of a committee to watch over any proposal that may be made for the introduction of a plan of National Education. The motion was seconded by Sir Henry Moncreiff, and supported by the present writer, Dr. MacLachlan, and different gentlemen, and, like the former, was unanimously agreed to.

CHAPTER LIII.

NATIONAL EDUCATION—PATRONAGE ABOLITION—PSALMODY—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES.

Dr. Begg never gave his mind much to the study of complicated questions of international politics; but he was never indifferent to the affairs of Europe, especially in their bearing on the interests of Romanism. On the 16th of January 1871, he delivered a lecture on "The War and its Lessons." In view of the successes of the Germans against the French, he anticipated with alarm a Prussian and Russian coalition. His fears might be characterised by some as of the nature of "Russophobia;" and happily they have not been realised as yet. But it is not quite clear that they were groundless.

At the meeting of Commission in March, Dr. Begg gave vigorous support to a motion which I made on the subject of National Education. The difference between Sir Henry Moncreiff's motion and mine was simply this. Both desired a national system of education. Both acknowledged that there was much that was good in the Lord Advocate's (Young) Bill. Both agreed that there were defects in it, and both specified substantially the same defects. But Sir Henry moved that the Commission should record their satisfaction generally with the Bill, and that certain points appear to deserve notice or to require consideration; while my amendment was to the effect, that "the Church should give no formal judgment on the measure until it has received such amendments as have been suggested." Dr. Begg's speech in favour of the amendment was an emphatic declaration in

favour of two principles—religious education and Scottish supervision. After Dr. Begg's speech, "Sir H. W. Moncreiff briefly replied, after which a vote was taken, when 68 voted for Sir Henry Moncreiff's motion, and 56 for Dr. Smith's amendment."

A public meeting was held in the Queen Street Hall on the 9th of March for the consideration of this Bill. It devolved on me to take the lead in opposition to those who gave an out-and-out support to the Bill. Dr. Begg was in London, but he sent the following letter, which was read to the meeting:—

"I regret much that, being in London in connection with the Education Bill, I cannot be present at your meeting to-morrow evening. The crisis is one of the greatest importance for Scotland, and I hope the meeting will give forth no uncertain sound. On certain points I believe that the mass of Scotsmen are agreed in regard to education. They desire that religious instruction shall be continued in our schools according to 'use and wont,' that the teachers shall have a proper status and remuneration, and that all the children in this land shall be well educated. By proper explanatory clauses all these objects may be secured by the present Bill. But there is one point of vital importance, without which, as it appears to me, no permanent security of any kind can be had, viz., that the management of the whole system shall be conducted by means of a public representative Board meeting in Edinburgh, and over whose appointment and proceedings the people of Scotland shall have complete control. The Bill, as it stands, might be very much condensed—indeed reduced almost to one clause, viz., 'Be it enacted that, for the future, the whole education of Scotland shall be managed and directed by the Privy Council in London.' To my mind this is simply intolerable, and the Scotch well deserve to be trampled on if they submit to it. Such an arrangement makes all the other clauses of the Bill uncertain and unsatisfactory. And why should Scotland be treated thus? The Royal Commissioners on Education recommended a public representative Board for the management of the new education scheme. Scotland has been managing her own system of public educa-

tion for three centuries, whilst England is only now beginning to emulate her example. Even Ireland is allowed to have a Board in Dublin for the management of her own education. Why, then, should Scotland, simply because she has hitherto been passive and uncomplaining, have her whole system handed over to the arbitrary despotism of two or three men who may be entire strangers to Scottish interests, whose proceedings hitherto have been far from satisfactory, and whose last act has been in the most arbitrary way to ignore religious instruction in all our normal schools?

"It is a fair question, indeed, whether this Privy Council system should not now be entirely abolished. It is an anomaly at the best, and it has continued long enough. Since the three countries are now to be taxed each for their respective systems of education, it is a fair question—and if the present proposal is pressed it will be an urgent one—whether each country should not provide entirely for its own education, and manage it independently. This would supersede at once the useless and dangerous power of the Privy Council, and place the whole subject on a fair and intelligible basis. But at all events I am clear that we should resist to the uttermost this attempt to thrust upon us an alien and unsatisfactory management as absolutely inconsistent with any security for a good educational system for Scotland."

The controversy was kept up by letters in the newspapers, some holding that the proposed measure was better than none; others, among whom was Dr. Begg, insisting that the Bill, unless amended, should not be passed.

The meeting to which I have just referred, and at which Dr. Begg was not present, was for "consideration of the Bill." It was, in fact, called by the supporters of the Bill, and those who were unfavourable to some of its provisions were regarded as intruders. But on the 4th of April a meeting was held in the same hall "of those desirous to see the Education Bill, now before the House of Commons, amended, in so far as it fails to secure religious education in our public schools, threatens to place Scottish education under a department of

the Privy Council in London, and to destroy the status of the schoolmaster." The last of these topics was committed to Dr. Begg; but he did not confine himself very strictly to it. He made a happy use of our old friend Dr. Busby. "I think it is stated that on one occasion a teacher kept on his hat in the presence of royalty, and that when he was asked afterwards why he did so, he said if the children thought there was a greater man in the world than himself they would not be submissive to his authority. But I think it would require great powers of imagination on the part of any child to suppose that there was not a greater man in the world than a man paid with £35 a year, and who was liable to be dismissed without trial by a man sitting on a stool in London." The following refers to what was always a favourite theme with him:—

"Many of the people of England no doubt suppose that such a book as our Shorter Catechism is not equal to the capacity of children; but I should like to know what doctrine, from the very existence of God downwards, may not be challenged on such grounds as that. What do we find by experience? My impression is, that the human memory has been disparaged, and most unjustly disparaged, in modern times. Men speak of the development of intellect, but what is the worth of it without memory? A well-stored memory is the very mother of intellect; and in charging the children's memory with the sublime truths embodied in the Shorter Catechism, though they do not fully understand them at the time, you are storing them with an element from which men who are thorough theologians may spring in aftertime. The old plan of teaching the Proverbs in the schools—making them commit the Proverbs to memory in the schools—was the real foundation of the *gumption* of the Scotch people; and the teaching of the Shorter Catechism is the real foundation of the logic of the Scotch people; and if you attempt to act in your schools upon such a theory as seems to be maintained in England, you will dwarf the minds of the Scotch people, and instead of having—as you undoubtedly have, and I have seen—Scotchmen rising to the

greatest eminence in all countries, you will have a dwarfish race. . . . My opinion is, that there should be a decided stand made in Scotland in opposition to this Bill. It may be said that the victories of peace are sometimes more dangerous than the effects of war. Scotland has resisted invasion from without in days of old, and successfully. Leaning her back upon her everlasting hills, she resisted the whole power of Rome; and no doubt, if an invasion of our country took place again, it would be found that the people would throw it back in defence of their hearths and homes. Here is an insidious attempt, by grouping the whole power in the Privy Council, and at the same time proclaiming that it has no desire, and will not attempt, to incorporate religious instruction with the secular instruction given now in the schools—an attempt to rob Scotland of what should be dearer to her than life."

The same subject was brought before the Presbytery of Edinburgh on the 26th of April, Dr. Begg proposing a resolution of which he had previously given notice. The discussion was very much on the same lines that were taken in that on my motion at the March Commission. Sir Henry Moncreiff moved an amendment to Dr. Begg's motion, and carried it by a majority of one (24–23). It is of some interest to note that, so far as the ministers present were concerned, Dr. Begg had a majority of two; the numbers being—for the motion, 13 ministers and 10 elders; for the amendment, 11 ministers and 13 elders. So small a vote in so large a Presbytery did not, of course, signify much.

At an earlier meeting of Presbytery (11th April), Mr. William Balfour proposed an overture to the General Assembly, to the effect that the Assembly should bring before the Legislature the principles of the Free Church, as set forth in the "Claim, Declaration, and Protest." In his speech in support of the overture, it is manifest that Dr. Begg had in view his own vindication from charges that were current regarding him, that he was looking forward to the abolition of patronage in the Established Church as opening a door

for his return to it. The charges had never been made openly, and therefore he could not meet them directly. But there is no mistaking the meaning of such sentences as these:—"He would not like to see any alteration in the case of the Church Establishment that was not a real improvement. He would not like to see the mere abolition of patronage in such a form as not at the same time to secure the spiritual independence of the Church, because he was pretty well persuaded that many of the people might be misled by the imperfect reformation, and that permanent mischief might be done by alterations that were not satisfactory."

There is no good reason now for concealing the fact that Dr. Begg was consulted by Sir Alexander Gordon and Mr. Strathearn Gordon (afterwards Lord Gordon), and other leading men in the Established Church, as to the measure for the Abolition of Patronage, which was actually passed in 1874. He regarded that measure as not fulfilling the requirement which he laid down. Still he regarded the abolition of patronage as a right thing in itself, and did not grudge it to the members of the Established Church; while he did not see that it went far towards the rendering a union betwixt the Established Church and the Free Church possible. He differed from many of his Free Church brethren in that he always held that there ought to be an Established Church in this country, and consequently rejoiced in every approximation to what he would have regarded as a right basis for such an Establishment; whereas many of them had come to embrace the belief that there ought to be no Established Church in the actual condition of matters in this country, and looked with disfavour on any measure that might hinder or delay the attainment of this object. He had no sympathy with such—if such there were—as would have preferred an unreformed to a reformed Establishment, on the ground that its reform diminished its vulnerability.

In the Index to the *Blue Book* for 1871, the entry under Dr. Begg's name is as follows:—

"*Begg, Dr.*—Speech on Sabbath Observance, 30, 31; Sustentation Fund, 67; Union, 185–193; Protest on Union, 196; speech on National Education, 227–232; American Deputation, 238; Psalmody, 256; Temperance, 271; Marriage Affinity Bill, 278."

From this it appears that, excepting those on Union and on National Education, no one of his speeches occupies more than a single page in the Blue Book—for the first of them occupies portions of two pages, less in the aggregate than a single page. That on National Education was a very important one. It was delivered in support of a motion which I made, in opposition to one by Sir Henry Moncreiff. Besides the great question of "Use and Wont," Dr. Begg strongly advocated an elected Scottish Board as the supreme authority in Scottish educational affairs, rather than a Scottish Committee of the Privy Council. The following extract merits quotation, not only as indicating the speaker's views on "Home Rule," but on account of the graphic illustration which it contains:—

"In regard to the Board, I think Scotland is entitled to the management of her own schools. Mr. Kidston has most fully expounded the bearing of this on religious instruction, and shown that unless we have control over the code of instruction, it is vain to say we have the matter in our own hands. Why should Scotland hesitate to ask, when, by clamour, Ireland receives, so many advantages? Not only is Ireland the petted child of the nation, but now we actually have a proposal made that we should dispense with our own religious institutions for the sake of the sister island. I say we are more fit to manage our education than the Irish. For three centuries we have done so. On a similar ground of experience we are more fit than the English. Why should old Scotland now consent, without the most solemn protestation, to have her most sacred affairs managed in the conclave of the Privy Council? I see no reason. In fact I go farther,

and hold that the people of Scotland should not only ask for themselves a Board to fix the code and manage the arrangements, but that we should also have our share of the money, and manage that too. The country gave Ireland nearly £400,000, and then a little ago £100,000 into the bargain, to be managed by three committees in Dublin; and we, because we are a quiet and peaceable people, asking nothing, get nothing. Some one has said that there is a vast difference between shearing a pig and shearing a sheep. Attempt to shear a pig, and you get abundance of cry and no wool; shear a sheep, and you get no cry, but abundance of wool. Scotland, though very quiet, has contributed more than her due share to the general taxation of the nation; and although we will allow the English people to manage many things, why should we, without a determined struggle, allow them to manage anything so vital as the upbringing of our children, which has a bearing on future generations, and a most material bearing on the interests even of England itself?"

Sir Henry Moncreiff's motion was carried against mine by a majority of 180 (316–136).

The only other one of his speeches in this Assembly that seems to require notice is that on Psalmody, which may as well be given entire:—

"Dr. Begg said he strongly agreed with what his friend Mr. Kidston had stated, that one of the snares before the Church was that of endeavouring to attract people to the house of God by something different from the preaching of the Gospel. He believed they were running at present a very great risk in that direction, and it was of vast importance that the Church should give no countenance whatever to that view; but, on the other hand, of course, it was most desirable that the Psalmody in the Church should be well conducted. In his own congregation there was regular teaching of psalmody, and this had been for many years. They had a choir—not a paid one, but consisting of those members of the congregation that were most proficient in music—assisting the precentor, but the whole congregation sang along with them. One thing he considered of importance was that

the precentors should be restrained. In some cases there was a tendency to turn the church into a singing-school—a tendency frequently to start new tunes that no one could sing but the precentor and the choir; and he thought they should be careful to place their arrest upon any tendency in that direction. He suggested that Mr. Bruce should be appointed convener of the committee, and Mr. Colin Brown vice-convener."

At the meeting of the Edinburgh Presbytery in June, Mr. William Balfour called attention to a statement, that a communication had been sent in the Queen's name to Pope Pius IX. congratulating him on his attainment of the twenty-fifth year of his popedom, and on the proposal of Dr. Begg, a committee was appointed to inquire into the matter. Both Mr. Balfour and Dr. Begg stated strongly their dissatisfaction with Mr. Gladstone's explanation of his letter to Mr. Dease (see p. 465). Dr. Begg said that "he did not speak of any particular Government; for all political men seemed of one mind, and all seemed equally ready to minister to the progress of Romanism in this country."

As convener of that committee I gave in a report to the Presbytery at its next meeting. The report merely stated that "the committee . . . regret that any step should have been taken by the Government which could possibly be regarded as giving any countenance to the system of which the Pope is the head." I am reported to have said that but for unwillingness to divide the committee, I should "certainly have been inclined to take a much stronger view of the matter;" and Dr. Begg said that, "with Dr. Smith, he would have been prepared to take a sterner view of the matter." Of course, the difference between the members of the committee and between the members of the Presbytery was not as to the evil of encouraging Popery, but as to the question whether the action of the Government had such a tendency. It is important to notice that this difference does

not seem to have been on party lines, for Mr. MacEwan, in seconding my motion, quoted from a sermon delivered a month earlier by Mr. Arnot of the High Church, which condemned the action of the Government quite as strongly as Mr. Balfour or Mr. MacEwan, or Dr. Begg or I could have done.

In September of this year Dr. Begg was examined by a Royal Commission appointed "to inquire into and report upon the operation of the Acts relating to Friendly Societies," &c. His evidence related exclusively to the constitution and operation of the Building Societies, with which he had had so much to do. These societies were not Friendly Societies in the technical sense of the term. Accordingly, a good deal of his evidence did not bear strictly on the objects of the Commission; but the chairman (Sir Stafford Northcote), at the close of it, said, "We are much obliged to you, and much interested in what you have said. What you have said in regard to the titles of land, and so forth, lies of course rather beyond our limits."

During the autumn Dr. Begg delivered some lectures in the Queen Street Hall on "The Ecclesiastical and Social Evils of Scotland, and how to remedy them." The first was given on the 2d October. Its topics were such as "pauperism, Voluntaryism, the reconstruction of the Presbyterian Church, education, the expatriation of the people, and the benefits of the crofting system, intemperance, better house accommodation for the working classes, the Game Laws, the duty of requiring paupers to work, the truck system," &c. As to the remedy, he held that it could only be effected by some measure of Home Rule, a Scottish Secretary, and the consideration of private bills by a Scottish Parliament, or some Scottish convention having parliamentary powers to that extent. The difficulties as to Scottish legislation are not yet removed; they are not even much mitigated. I am confident that most reasonable men look for their removal in

the way hinted at by Dr. Begg. Give us an English, a Scottish, and an Irish Convention with parliamentary powers for the consideration of all purely local business; give us an English, a Scottish, and an Irish Secretary of State—all being members of the Cabinet—and Scottish interests will have a fair chance of a due share of the time and thought of the Imperial Parliament. But not otherwise.

The portions of the lecture which related to Voluntaryism and to the reconstruction of Presbyterianism subjected Dr. Begg to a good deal of abuse and misrepresentation at the hands of the *Daily Review*, at that time the organ of Voluntaryism. *That* goes without saying. At this time we find our friend advocating the training of our students in the art of speaking, so as to enable them to desist from reading their sermons. "Although (he says) it may be readily admitted that some men can read sermons with much power and effect, yet undoubtedly for the great mass of ordinary congregations the opposite plan will be found much more effective if a man can only speak well. But everything depends on this; the error at present is that men are not trained to speak." I have stated before that I have never been so strong an anti-paperist as my friend was. But with this statement I cordially agree. "For the great mass of ordinary congregations" reading is very undesirable. But I am persuaded that the standard of preaching would be lowered if reading were altogether disallowed. Those who do not read share in the elevation of the standard, and so the "mass of ordinary congregations" profit.

At the November Commission the subject of National Education gave rise to a keen—not to say an angry—discussion. A motion made by Mr. Nixon and supported by Dr. Begg was put against an amendment by Dr. Rainy, and was lost by 13 (105–92). The only thing in Dr. Begg's speech that I notice is the weak part of it. "Reference (he said) was made to the Shorter Catechism, as being opposed to the

theory of the Baptists; and because they objected to it, it is said to be denominational. The Shorter Catechism is against the Unitarians, because it contains strong statements about the Divinity of Christ; and it is against the atheists, because it contains statements about the existence of God. But did his friends on the other side call everything denominational to which any human being could by any possibility object?" I see that this sentence was received with "applause." I confess that to me it does not seem even plausible. The term *denominational* is not applicable to the Shorter Catechism on the ground that it opposes atheists and Unitarians, because these are not Christian *denominations.* But it is denominational as it is opposed to Romanists and Arminians and Baptists, because they are admitted to be Christian denominations. In a cooler moment Dr. Begg would have taken higher ground. He would have argued that the doctrine of the Catechism is true, and that those who disagree with it can be protected by a "conscience clause."

A crowded and enthusiastic public meeting was held in Edinburgh, at the close of November, on the regulation of the liquor traffic. Dr. Begg was one of the speakers, and strongly advocated a permissive Act for local option. "In regard to the Permissive Bill, against which many speak, it seems to me a clear proposition that those who have to pay for the mischief after it is done should have power to prevent the mischief before it happens." His peroration had the old ring about it. "I will just conclude with this remark, that the nations of the world have never sunk in consequence of attacks from without, but they all sink in consequence of corruption within. On the other hand, it is not your revenue, great though it may be, if it be derived from false sources; it is not your soldiers; it is not your fleet; it is not the wisdom of your senators, if that wisdom be not regulated by moral considerations; it is none of these things that will give permanence and stability to a nation; but it is morality and

religion—it is the strength of sound principle. Righteousness exalteth a nation; sin is the destruction of any people. And just in proportion as you succeed in laying an arrest upon this present evil of our country, just in the same proportion will you promote its moral and physical stability, and give prospects to our children and our children's children that the eminence with which Britain has been distinguished in the past shall continue to future generations."

The second lecture on the "Ecclesiastical and Social Evils of Scotland" (see p. 476) was delivered on the 4th December. It was much less discursive than the former, and consisted almost entirely of an argument to show that the main evils are due to the disadvantage which attaches to Scotland as united with a larger country, and to violations of the terms on which that union was effected. The lecturer showed that the main cause of our ecclesiastical divisions is the Act of Queen Anne establishing patronage, and advocated the repeal of that Act. It is scarcely possible to over-estimate the evils of patronage. The Act 1712 should never have been passed. It is demonstrable that that Act was the occasion of innumerable evils. But it is not so certain that these or similar evils would not have ensued had that Act never existed; still less that the repeal of the Act would put an end to the evils. In point of fact, the repeal of the Act, now more than a dozen years ago, does not seem to have materially lessened the evils.

The great question of national education was again debated in the Presbytery of Edinburgh on the 27th of December. Dr. Begg, of course, supported a motion which I made, and Dr. Bonar seconded, in opposition to a motion made by Sir Henry Moncreiff, seconded by Professor MacGregor. As usual we were in a minority (32–21) of 11. It was with reference to these perpetual minorities that Dr. Begg made the statement, which he constantly repeated afterwards, that truth and right have been in a minority since the time of Noah!

CHAPTER LIV.

ASSEMBLY PROCEEDINGS—NATIONAL EDUCATION—EDINBURGH NEWSPAPERS—KNOX MONUMENT.

THE controversy regarding the National Education Bill was waged with spirit. Deputations waited on the Lord Advocate representing the views of the majority of the Church Courts of the Free Church. It must be admitted that they fairly enough stated that the Free Church desired security for religious instruction; but then they neutralised the effect of this statement by intimating that they did not insist on this demand as essential to their acceptance of the measure. I remember, in a speech which I do not find reported, to have twitted Sir Henry Moncreiff by likening him to a character in fiction, who, on his earnest suit for a fair lady's hand being rejected, magnanimously replied that "it was of no consequence"! On the other side, a "Scottish Educational Association" was formed, composed mainly of Established Churchmen, the minority in the Free Church Courts, and Episcopalians. Dr. Begg spoke at a meeting of this Association on the 23d of February 1872. He pointed out very clearly that our case suffered from the idea that the Lord Advocate's Bill left it to the option of the local School Boards to insist upon the continuance of religious instruction in the schools. This was true to the letter; but then this permission was virtually neutralised by two restrictions. Religious instruction was to be excluded during a great part of the school-hours, and could only be given before or after the proper work of the day, and

then the "time-table," over which the local Boards were to have no power, might practically exclude it even from those hours when it was not formally excluded. He also protested strongly against the Bill on account of the mode of its dealing with the status of teachers, and on account of its committing the supreme control of Scottish education to a non-Scottish department.

A few days later, Dr. Begg spoke at a meeting on the same subject in London, presided over by the late Lord Shaftesbury. It was in perfect sincerity that Dr. Begg made such a statement as the following; but whether it was absolutely accurate, and whether, so far as it was accurate, it was due solely or mainly to the parochial schools, is not quite so certain: "The Parliament, which sat at Edinburgh, passed an Act for the Establishment of Parochial Schools. What followed? An improvement, such as the world had never seen, took place on the moral and intellectual character of the people, so that, in spite of the rigour of the climate, in spite of the sterility of the earth, Scotland became a country which had no reason to envy the fairest portions of the globe. Wherever the Scotchman went—and there were few parts of the world to which he did not go—he carried his superiority with him. If he was admitted into a public office, he worked his way up to the highest post; if he got employment in a business or shop, his trade is the best in the street; if he enlisted in the army, he became a colour-sergeant; if he went to a colony, he was the most thriving planter there." The subject of the Lord Advocate's Bill was discussed at great length in the March Commission. Dr. Begg spoke briefly at the close of the debate, but cordially supported the motion of Dr. Nixon in opposition to that of Sir Henry Moncreiff. The latter was carried by a majority of 64 (152-88). The same subject was again discussed in the Edinburgh Presbytery at a special meeting on the 13th of March, and with the same result; a motion by Mr MacEwan being supported by 20

votes, and an amendment, moved by Dr. Blaikie, by 33. At the annual meeting of the Scottish Reformation Society in March, one of the resolutions was moved by Dr. Begg. It had reference to the events on the Continent, and especially in Italy, which seemed to be favourable to Protestantism, or, at least, unfavourable to the papacy. In supporting his motion, he called attention to the fact that every event prejudicial to papal interests on the Continent only made the Romanists the more earnest to promote their cause in this country, while their efforts in this direction are furthered by the ignorance and the apathy of Protestants.

Again, in the month of April, Dr. Begg was one of the speakers at a great meeting, presided over by the Duke of Buccleuch, in opposition to the Lord Advocate's Education Bill. He never seemed to tire of repeating the same arguments, enunciating the same principles, emphasising the same facts, and drawing from them the same conclusion. It used to seem strange that he never wearied of his own repetitions, when he deemed that the cause which he had at heart would be served by them; and perhaps it was still stranger that his hearers did not weary of them.

A subject worthy of more attention than has been hitherto accorded to it was brought before the Edinburgh Presbytery, at its April meeting, by Mr. M'Phail of Pilrig. It was introduced in the form of the following overture to the Assembly:—"Whereas the highest end for which the Church exists in the world is the glory of God and the salvation of men through the gospel; and whereas it is peculiarly needful in these times that the Church should take full advantage of the experience of her ministers and elders as to the best means of promoting this end both at home and abroad, it is humbly overtured to the ensuing General Assembly by the Presbytery of Edinburgh, that in the arrangement of the Assembly's business, as large a portion of time as possible be given to the consideration of matters immediately bearing on

this subject, and that not only in the ordinary public diets of the Assembly, but also in private conferences."

Ecclesiastic as he was, Dr. Begg was not indifferent to such an object as this. He very cordially supported the overture, whose transmission was moved in an excellent speech by Mr. M'Phail, seconded by Dr. Moody Stuart, and unanimously agreed to by the Presbytery.

Outside of the Union question, Dr. Begg did not take a specially prominent part in the proceedings of the Assembly of 1872. There were two "cases" connected with Highland congregations. Regarding each of them I moved and he seconded a motion, but in both cases we were in a minority. The one case, as involving an important principle, calls for notice. A congregation was vacant. A call to a minister was signed by 24 out of 66 communicants, and by about 400 out of about 500 adherents. The Presbytery sustained the call, but the Synod reversed their finding. The matter turned on the interpretation of the law of the Church, which is as follows:—"That when a division exists in a congregation, the Presbytery shall not sustain a call unless it be subscribed by the majority of the whole members on the communicants' roll." That there was a real division in this congregation was notorious and indisputable. But the Presbytery proceeded on the assumption that there was no division, because there was no formal dissent. The question, therefore, was one of definition. We argued that a vote carried by a majority of only three in favour of one candidate as against another indicated such a division as is contemplated in the Act. On the other side, it was argued that the absence of appeal indicated that the division had ceased to exist. But both at the bar and in the House the main dependence was placed on the overwhelming majority of adherents. Now, it is not denied that in all or most of our Highland congregations there are many in the position of adherents who, in the Lowlands, would be communicants. It may be regretted that these

should have no voice in the election and call of a minister. But then the Church has no security that the body of adherents may not contain numbers who would not have been admitted as communicants. A man is admitted to the communion by the kirk-session, presumably on good cause shown for his admission. But a man becomes an adherent simply at his own will. I cannot, therefore, think that the finding of the Assembly in this case was in accordance either with the letter of the Act, or with the spirit of the constitution of the Church.

Equally unsuccessful were we in a third case, in which Dr. Begg moved, and I seconded, a motion which was defeated by a majority of 74 (194-120).

The most interesting portion of a powerful speech on National Education, was the following vindication of his co-operating with Established Churchmen and Episcopalians:—

"I regret trespassing on your time. But some of our friends ought to pay rent for the use of me, because, but for reference to me, some of them would have very short speeches to make. In the case of Mr. M'Leod from Skye, Mr. Cockburn, at the bar of the Assembly, said the Presbytery kept him like a bagged fox, so that when they wanted a run any day they let the fox out and had a chase. I feel there has been the most perfect consistency on my part, and no one has attempted to show the contrary except by quibbling the statements I have made. . . . A great deal has been made by Mr. Brown-Douglas of certain negotiations in London and their result. I think a result most gratifying has flowed from these negotiations, the nature of which, however, he has very considerably misunderstood. He spoke of a deputation from the Established Church. There was no deputation from the Established Church. There were respected members of the Established Church who happened to agree with me, more than, unfortunately, some of my own brethren do. I do these men the credit of saying, that whilst some of them may hold views with which we cannot sympathise in regard to the peculiar management of the parochial schools, yet I do them

the credit to say, that I believe them to be as honest and as earnest as I or any man in this Assembly is, in regard to securing the continuance of religious instruction in our native land. Though we were shut out practically from the deputations of this House in regard to the future management of the education of Scotland—set aside from those deputations which have been sent by this Assembly—we have appealed to others, and we have not appealed in vain. But we went up simply to represent an association which has been formed in Edinburgh, and which, I think, has been eminently instrumental, by the divine blessing, in awakening the people of Scotland to a sense of the danger of their present position. We did not go as representing the Free Church, or any Church, although it was natural enough for a reporter in London to make that mistake."

To this Assembly there came up several overtures relating to the Established Church, in connection with the movement for the abolition of patronage. Dr. Begg proposed a motion on the subject, and made a long speech. His attitude is clearly indicated in the following sentences:—

"When it is said that it has been represented in various quarters that this mere change in the law of patronage is sufficient to reconcile and unite the Free Church to the Church now established, I am persuaded that there is a mistake in that. I do not know who ever said that. I know it has been said, and I say it now, that it will certainly remove a great evil out of the land, and that in so far as it tends to remove a great evil out of the land, I am on the side of it."

Dr. Begg moved the Assembly to petition Parliament against the Prison Ministers' Bill. His motion was seconded by Dr. Rainy, and unanimously agreed to.

Dr. Begg had given notice of a motion on the vexed question of hymns; but it was moved by his friend and mine, Dr. Hugh Martin, in an exceptionally able speech, and Dr. Begg only spoke briefly in its support at the close of the debate. The motion of Dr. Adam, permitting the

use of a collection of hymns in the public worship of the Church, was carried by an overwhelming majority. I have already stated that I never took so high ground as Dr. Begg did in opposition to the use of hymns. But I cannot but regard the preference of many of our people for hymns over psalms as an indication of a tendency to molluscosity in the piety of our people. I know of very few hymns which do not give greater prominence than the Scriptures give to those attributes of God, which are frequently represented as indicating a character of simple benevolence detached from righteousness. Of course many most excellent people take delight in the singing of hymns, and many may do so without harm. But none the less is there danger in it.

During the summer and autumn of this year Dr. Begg was incessantly occupied in taking part in meetings held all over the country in connection with the Union controversy, and in otherwise fighting the battle on which he considered that issues of the greatest magnitude depended. He was at this time "the best-abused man in the country." There is a vulgar trick which is called "pricking the garter." A ribbon is doubled in its middle and is then rolled into a flat disk. The trick consists in putting a pin into the central double. It would be difficult to thrust a pin into a file of a Scottish newspaper of this period *without* hitting some article or letter abusive of Dr. Begg. In Edinburgh there were, at that time, three daily papers. The *Scotsman*, which was by far the most influential, admitted that the anti-Unionists were right as Free Churchmen, but held that the Free Church was wrong from the first. The *Daily Review* had little influence outside of the Free and United Presbyterian Churches, but was all in all with the latter, and with the Unionists in the former. The *Courant* looked down from its isolated elevation with grand contempt on the controversy and the controversialists. In the pages of the second of these papers, Dr. Begg and his party were the

objects of unlimited abuse from day to day; while in those of the first and the third they were treated as men who were consistent in the advocacy of an erroneous creed. But more of this anon.

At the Commission in August Dr. Begg seconded a motion made by Dr. Duff, in recommendation of "systematic giving." His speech was short but pithy.

At this Commission was announced the passing of the Education Act for Scotland. Dr. Begg took credit to himself and his friends for having got the Act made considerably better than those on the other side of the House had insisted on its being. In particular, he took credit for the recognition in the preamble of religious instruction. I always felt that we were entitled to the credit of this, whatever may have been the value of it. Had there been no such recognition, it would still have been competent for the School Boards to require religious teaching, and the preamble of the Act did not make it imperative. Still it was something to show that the Legislature, in passing the Act, distinctly contemplated religious teaching as within its scope. It became evident that the question was relegated to the several School Boards; and meetings were held in order to promote the election of men who were in favour of religious education. At such a meeting I find Dr. Begg speaking in October. "After arguing," says the report, "against the probability of children being instructed in religion by their parents or by the ministers, he went on to assert that there was a great want of patriotism and public spirit in the country at present. Men were too apt to devote themselves exclusively to their business and families, and to shrink from public life. Such a state of things was inconsistent with public liberty." He spoke on the same subject in the November Commission.

About this time, in connection with the tercentenary of the Reformation, a movement was made for the erection of a

monument to the memory of Knox. It was seriously proposed that the monument should take the form of a stained-glass window in St. Giles' Cathedral! It was edifying to witness the scorn with which Dr. Begg heard this proposal. For the credit of our townsmen it ought to be stated that the proposal was regarded as simply ludicrous. A committee was appointed, who, in due time, recommended a colossal statue. Their recommendation was accepted, and—nothing was done. Probably the same proposal will be made in 1972 and in 2072, with the same result!

CHAPTER LV.

DR. GUTHRIE'S DEATH—TRANSFERENCE OF FREE CHURCH SCHOOLS—DISESTABLISHMENT.

At the meeting of the Presbytery in January 1873, Dr. Begg made a short speech on the hymn question, which Professor MacGregor and some others would not consent to hold as settled by the decision of last Assembly. It is important because it compresses into brief compass his oft-repeated argument on the subject. I therefore give it at length:—

"Dr. Begg thought the question was one which converged towards a very serious result to the Church. One of the greatest forms of tyranny would be the principle that the minister could introduce what sort of hymn he chose. Such a course would be a total subversion of Presbyterianism. Erroneous doctrines had been more frequently introduced into churches by means of hymns than by anything else. Hymns had been introduced into England, America, and Scotland for the purpose of introducing novelties in doctrine, and of diverging[1] people from the old doctrines of their Church. This did not apply to paraphrases, because they, unlike hymns, were not entirely apart from any particular portion of the Bible. He held that the psalms were sufficient and complete for all congregational worship, and it was an uncommonly bad sign of a man that he could not find a psalm to suit his sermon."

On the last day of February, Dr. Begg performed the painful duty of conducting one of the services at the funeral of Dr. Guthrie, and expressing the deep sorrow, not of the

[1] "Diverting"?—T. S.

Free Church only, but of the entire community, at the close of a career blessed with the thanksgiving of multitudes who had been ready to perish.

At the meeting of the March Commission it fell upon me, in the absence of the two conveners, to give in a report of two committees on education. The subjects on which I mainly dwelt were compensation for Free Church schools transferred to the School Boards, and retiring allowances for teachers who might be superseded. I had the cordial support of Dr. Candlish, Dr. Julius Wood, Sir Henry Moncreiff, and Dr. Begg. From this time Dr. Begg went with all his energy into these two subjects, and had more to do than any one else in getting partial redress for the injury which the Education Act, as originally passed, inflicted on the Free Church—partial, because a large number of schools had been transferred without compensation before the amendment was passed. A few sentences may be given from his speech on this occasion:—

"He knew of no reason why parties were entitled to benefit at the expense of the Free Church. They had benefited by it already, and if they gave a vote of thanks to the Free Church for what it had done already, they would do no more than their duty. He was strongly of opinion that they should aim at having a bill in reference not only to compensation to Deacons' Courts for schools, but also in reference to retiring salaries for teachers that were superseded from no fault of their own, but simply because of the transitions that were taking place in the matter of education. Among their teachers many estimable men would be left in destitute circumstances, and he did not see that there was any hardship in making it much more easy for local School Boards to give compensation to these teachers than it is by the bill. There was one other matter in Dr. Smith's report that was of very great importance—namely, that they should give their full influence in the direction of continuing the former system of education in all the schools."

At the meeting of the Presbytery of Edinburgh at the end

of March, the subject of Disestablishment was for the first time introduced into the Free Church. Dr. Rainy proposed, and with characteristic ability supported, an overture to the Assembly on the subject, based on the decision recently given by the Privy Council on what was called the Bennet case. The overture, after a long preamble as to the effect of that decision on the Church of England, and as to the disapprobation expressed by the Free Church at the Disruption of the terms on which the Church of Scotland consented to remain in connection with the State, simply proposed that "the Assembly should take the premises into their most serious consideration, and do therein as to their wisdom may seem meet, with a view to the interests of truth and the well-being of the cause of Christ within these realms." But while the overture was thus indefinite, Dr. Rainy and those who supported him made it sufficiently clear that in their judgment the result of the serious consideration of the premises by the Assembly ought to be their "going in for" the disestablishment of both Churches, and for a complete separation between Church and State all through the British Empire. Mr. MacEwan moved, and I seconded, a motion which, while admitting the unsatisfactory position of both the Established Churches, intimated that disestablishment was not the proper remedy for the admitted evils. Dr. Begg supported this motion. He then took up the ground which he maintained to the last, that the State had done wrong in imposing, and the Churches in accepting, wrong conditions of establishment; but that to tell the State to right that wrong by the perpetration of the other wrong, of ignoring altogether their duty to God and His truth and His Church, would be to commit a greater wrong than either of the two. This ground, deliberately assumed then, has been maintained by the "Constitutionalists" in the Free Church ever since, and I trust it will never be abandoned. No Free Churchman can consistently advocate the continuance of the

Erastian relation between Church and State which has subsisted since the Reformation in England, or of that whose inauguration in Scotland caused the Disruption of 1843. Just as little can any Free Churchman consistently advocate such a negation of the duty of the State as would be implied in simple disestablishment, the granting of the demand of the Liberation Society for religious equality, and the secularisation of the endowments of the Churches.

In the *Daily Review* of May 15, I find the following paragraph extracted from an Irish paper:—

"THE REV. DR. BEGG IN BELFAST.—A number of gentlemen—lay and clerical—entertained the Rev. Dr. Begg at breakfast in the Imperial Hotel on Monday morning. Several addresses were delivered by those present, expressive of delight at the visit of the doctor to Belfast. Dr. Begg delivered a forcible and eloquent address in reference to the circumstances in which we are placed nationally, and especially in reference to the present position of ecclesiastical affairs in Scotland, and the duty of Protestants at the approaching crisis, and intimated that under certain contingencies he would shortly again visit Ulster in conjunction with other distinguished ministers of the Free Church of Scotland, among whom, we anticipate, will be Dr. Horatius Bonar, Dr. Samuel Miller, Dr. Hugh Martin, and others.—*Northern Whig.*"

Those who were taking interest in Scottish ecclesiastical affairs at the time will have no difficulty in understanding what were these "certain contingencies" which are somewhat mysteriously alluded to in this extract. To others light will be cast on the matter in the sequel.

The Assembly of 1873 was one of the most important held since the Disruption. But its importance and its excitement—which was intense—was concentrated on the Union question. Of course the ordinary business had to be done, but in the doing of it men's minds were distracted. Before the Union discussion came on they were looking

forward to it, and when it was over they were looking back to it. In the index to the *Blue Book* Dr. Begg is credited with only three speeches—on "Union," on "Education," on "Mining Districts,"—and the reports of the last two do not together occupy more than three-quarters of a page. But they are both of special interest. That on Education closes with a hearty and most merited tribute to the services rendered to the cause of education by Dr. Nixon, on his resignation of the convenership—a tribute all the more valuable because Dr. Begg and he had not always agreed on educational subjects: "He was sure that the Church would unanimously express their conviction of the great services which Dr. Nixon had rendered to this cause. He was exceedingly sorry that Dr. Nixon should feel it necessary to resign; and he was sure it was only because of the tear and wear of his health. In accepting his resignation, he had no doubt the Assembly would record the high estimation they had of the value of Dr. Nixon's services to the Education Scheme."

His interest in the mining population was life-long. "He was born," he states in the speech on this subject, "within two miles of that Coatbridge of which they had been speaking, and remembered the time when there were scarcely more than two houses in that place, which had now nearly 40,000 inhabitants."

CHAPTER LVI.

UNION CONTROVERSY.

WHILE freely acknowledging that I have no right to expect that I shall be regarded as an impartial judge in the matter, I venture to assert that the history of the Free Church since the Disruption is one of the most instructive portions of all ecclesiastical history. It teaches, perhaps more emphatically than any other portion, what all ecclesiastical history teaches if it be read aright, at once the potency of the divine element in the Church of Christ, and the utter weakness of its human element. It emphasises the lesson at once of trust in God, and of distrust in man,—a lesson which, in its two branches, summarises well nigh the whole of Christian wisdom. *Nil desperandum* is its one precept, *Nil sperandum* its other. Most emphatically is the lesson inculcated by the "ten years' conflict," 1863–73.

From the earliest days after the Disruption fond hopes were cherished by many of a union between the Free and the United Presbyterian Churches, and various schemes were propounded for effecting what many deemed to be one of the most desirable of all consummations, and all admitted to be on many accounts desirable, if it could be accomplished without the sacrifice of principle on either side. It was the late Sir George Sinclair that took the most prominent part in this movement, which at first could, of course, be only tentative. It had the effect of turning men's thoughts at once

to the advantages of such a union, and to the difficulty of effecting it. The negotiations in those days were necessarily of a private, and in some measure of a confidential, character. It was no secret that such negotiations were being carried on; but reticence was very properly observed as to the precise character of them. A large number of office-bearers of the two Churches, headed by Sir George, did indeed put forth a statement, but it went little beyond an expression of the desirableness of the object contemplated. I was not in this country at the time; and if I had been, I should probably not have occupied a position which would have entitled me to expect to be asked to take part in the deliberations. I am therefore unable to give information which would be interesting now, and which there is now no reason to keep back if it were available. This only I will say, from what I heard from many who took part in these deliberations—almost all of whom have now passed away—that there was no marked difference between those who were subsequently ranged on the opposite sides in the Union controversy. All desired the end; all saw the difficulties in the way of its attainment. The future Anti-Unionists did the former no less than the future Unionists; the future Unionists did the latter no less than the future Anti-Unionists. From various circumstances, indeed—from the treatment which he had received from some of the supporters of the Established Church in connection with the question of sites, and from the great kindness which he and his congregation had received at the hands of a United Presbyterian congregation—Dr. Begg's feelings were stronger in favour of such a union than those of most of his brethren.

During the year 1862–3 it was agreed that the matter should be taken up by the Churches. The Synod of the United Presbyterian Church met first, and discussed the subject with great ability and in an excellent spirit. They addressed a communication to the Assembly of the Free

Church, intimating that, "after lengthened reasoning, the Synod resolved that a Committee be appointed to consider the subject of union with other Presbyterian bodies, in all its bearings, and more immediately, to meet with any Committees that may be appointed by the General Assembly of the Free Church, or by the Synod of the English Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, or the Original Secession Church, and to confer with them respecting the relative positions of these several bodies and the United Presbyterian Church, and the steps proper to be taken for their present co-operation and ultimate union." This communication was received by the Free Church Assembly with profound respect. It gave rise to a long and most interesting discussion—debate it could not be called. Dr. Gibson indeed moved, and Dr. Forbes seconded, the addition of a sentence to the motion made by Dr. Robert Buchanan and seconded by Dr. Charles Brown. But it merely repeated in somewhat more detail what the motion itself confessedly contained, that the Committee should have due regard to the maintenance of the principles of the Church. By the almost unanimous advice of those friends whose sympathies were most with him, Dr. Gibson withdrew his "rider," and Dr. Buchanan's motion was passed unanimously.

Dr. Begg's speech on this occasion was of a high order. Not falling behind any of his brethren in their estimate of the blessing of unity, and of the advantages which the contemplated union might be expected to yield, he dwelt upon the importance of the truth which he regarded certain forms of Voluntaryism as controverting,—the truth that nations and their rulers, no less than individuals, are under obligation to promote the cause of Christianity. On this ground he stood all through the long and painful controversy, ever declaring that if he could be convinced that the United Presbyterians held views compatible with the inculcation upon nations and their rulers of their duty as under law to Christ, he would hail

a union with them. He even went further than most in expressing the opinion that all matters relating to finance and other details might be satisfactorily adjusted.

The Union Committee which was appointed by this Assembly was a large one, and was composed with perfect fairness, Drs. Gibson and Forbes, who had taken the less favourable view of the prospect of union, being included in it, as well as, of course, Drs. Begg and Nixon, who had spoken most earnestly in favour of the appointment of the Committee as proposed by Dr. Buchanan. No members of the Committee wrought more loyally than they.

The Report of the Union Committee to the General Assembly of 1864 was very brief. It contained a recognition of the excellent spirit in which the negotiations had been conducted on the part of the United Presbyterian brethren. It stated six important points on which perfect agreement had been evinced, and one on which there was difference of view among the negotiants. This was as to the relation of the civil magistrate, or the State, to the Church and cause of God. On this point statements were given in parallel columns by the representatives of the two Churches. All that the Committee asked, and all that Dr. Candlish proposed, was that the Committee should be reappointed to continue the conferences until they should be able to present a definite report on the whole subject. But to Dr. Wood and others it appeared that the differences already evinced were irreconcilable. There was no hope that the United Presbyterians would adopt the views of the Free Church. There was no possibility of the Free Church's adopting those of the United Presbyterian Church, without a sacrifice of a great and important principle. Dr. Wood therefore moved that the Committee should indeed be reappointed, but no longer as a Union, but only as a Co-operation Committee. Dr. Begg and Dr. Nixon strongly urged Dr. Wood to withdraw his motion, mainly on the ground that it was premature, that the question had not

been fully discussed in the Committee, and that light might arise in the course of further discussion. Dr. Wood consented to this, to the great joy of all; as all felt that that would not be the doing of the Free Church which was done in opposition to Dr. Wood or without his concurrence. But Dr. Begg went further than he was logically called to go. He strongly stated, "I believe it will be possible to find a solution of that problem; at all events, I think we should try." Again, "If we look at the questions themselves, it seems to me that there is a possible solution." Thus far, then, Dr. Begg was a strong "Unionist," not only as cherishing the *desire* for union on sound principles—which he never ceased to cherish—but also in holding the *expectation* that such a union could be formed without the sacrifice of principle by the Free Church, an expectation which he afterwards considered himself constrained to abandon. At this Assembly a proposal was received from the Reformed Presbyterian Church, that they also should be received into the negotiations for union. This proposal gave great satisfaction to all parties.

Very little was done in the Assembly of 1865 on the subject of Union, and in that little Dr. Begg was precluded from taking any part by his occupancy of the Moderator's chair. The Report of the Committee was very brief, merely intimating that the Joint Committee had met ten times, that they had frankly stated their views regarding those doctrines on which there might have been supposed to be any material difference, and they had found no such difference to exist. From this statement, however, Drs. Wood and Forbes had dissented, on the ground that on a matter of so vital importance the Committee ought to have instituted more detailed inquiries. On this line two motions were made in the Assembly; but that of Dr. Rainy, simply approving the Report and reappointing the Committee, was carried almost unanimously. It may be presumed that, had Dr. Begg been at liberty to

speak and vote, he would have supported this motion. It was very heartily supported by Dr. Nixon.

It was in the Assembly of 1866 that the Union *controversy* began. The Report of the Committee left the matters of agreement and disagreement very much as in former years; and all that Dr. Buchanan proposed on behalf of the Committee was, that the Report should be sent down to Presbyteries for their information, and in order that they might, if they saw cause, make any suggestions to the Committee as to the further conduct of the negotiations. A counter-motion was made by Mr. Brodie of Monimail, and seconded by Dr. Forbes, that the Committee should be discharged. Dr. Blaikie made a strong speech as to the importance of contemplating a larger union in due time,—the reconstruction of the national Presbyterianism by the formation of a Church which should include a reformed Establishment. Dr. Begg strongly supported Dr. Buchanan's motion, but made it pretty evident that he neither expected nor desired that the Presbyteries should altogether approve of the Report which was to be transmitted to them. He stated strongly the view, which he never afterwards abandoned or materially modified, that the Free Church could not in faithfulness consent to holding the duty of the civil magistrate with reference to the Church as an open question. At the same time, he disclaimed all expectation of any rightful union with the Established Church. In answer to Dr. Blaikie, he said—"It was a far more noble thing, in his opinion, to maintain the principle of a Church Establishment when they had nothing to expect in connection with it than it was when they had something to gain. He did not sympathise with the opinion that they ought to look to the Establishment with any expectation at all. They had nothing to do with it but to protest against its corruptions and impenitence for past sins. For his part, he did not see any Establishment on the face of the earth that deserved any support, and he had no idea that until the Establishment

was shivered to pieces any reconstruction would take place. But for that very reason, if there is a principle of God's Word involved, it is a more noble thing to stand by it when we have nothing to gain by it." Dr. Begg, however, concluded with the expression of a strong hope that the difficulties in the way of Union would be got over, and the Union ere long accomplished.

It was no secret at the time, though it was not made public till the next meeting of the Assembly, that a "little rift within the lute" of the Union Committee occurred at its first meeting. Some members of the Committee insisted that in sending the Report to Presbyteries, and inviting them to offer suggestions to the Committee, the Assembly intimated that these suggestions were to influence the future action of the Committee. By those who held that view it was contended that the action of the Committee should be suspended until the receipt of such suggestions as might be offered. And I think they had good sense on their side. But the majority decided otherwise. Dr. Begg, Dr. Gibson, and Mr. Main thereupon withdrew from the Committee for a time.

The Assembly of 1867 was the critical point in the Union controversy. Three motions were made. That on the part of the Committee was given notice of by Dr. Candlish, and in his absence, was moved by Dr. Rainy. It was, after a preamble, to the effect that, "being of opinion, as at present advised, that, as regards the first head of the programme, considered in itself, there appears to be no bar to the Union contemplated, the General Assembly, while reserving final judgment on the whole case and every part thereof, direct the Committee to give their earnest attention to the other heads of the programme, especially those which deal with the worship, government, and discipline of the Church, and with those important practical questions which relate to property and finance." In opposition to this Dr. Begg moved as follows:—"The Assembly, on receiving the Report laid on the table

by the Committee on Union with other Churches, approve of the diligence of the Committee, and reappoint it with its former instructions. The Assembly at the same time, considering the immature state of the question, the overtures now on the table, and the fact that, whilst only one-third of the members of this Church are entitled to be present in the Assembly, the people of the Church at large have never been consulted in regard to this matter at all, reserve their judgment on any part of the programme till the Union Committee shall have completed its work by bringing up a report on all the heads of the programme, with definite proposals, and the grounds on which they rest, so that the General Assembly and the Church may have the whole subject before them."

Dr. Nixon made a third motion, as follows:—". . . The General Assembly, continuing to be deeply impressed with the duty and importance of aiming at Union of all the Disestablished Churches in Scotland, reappoint the former Committee with the former instructions. They direct their Committee to use all diligence in prosecuting conferences on all the subjects, with a view to a final report, which shall contain the conclusions arrived at, with the grounds on which they rest, so that the General Assembly may be in circumstances to submit the whole question in a satisfactory form to the Church at large."

It will be seen that the last two motions do not differ widely from one another; their chief difference is the omission from Dr. Nixon's of the specific statement given in Dr. Begg's of the grounds on which the Assembly should refuse to give a decision. Many of those who were, upon the whole, of one mind with Dr. Begg, could not support a motion which would have amounted to a declaration of the inability of any General Assembly to do anything; for it is as true of every Assembly as of that one, that only a third of the whole ministry are members of it. But while the motions were so nearly alike, the rules of the House required that they should

first of all be put to the vote as against each other. This was done, and Dr. Nixon's motion was carried against Dr. Begg's by a majority of 29 (90–61). Dr. Begg then rose and said "that he intended most cordially to vote for Dr. Nixon's motion as against Dr. Rainy's." The latter was carried by a majority of 226 (346–120). Hereupon Dr. Begg laid on the table a "protest," signed by himself and others. This was till then a procedure, so far as I know, without precedent. It was understood by many on the other side to have been adopted with a view to litigation on the subject of property, and because it was deemed to have more validity to that end than the ordinary "dissent." Thus it increased the irritation, which was already intense; and I do not know that it would, in the unhappy event alluded to, have been of more effect than a dissent.

The controversy was now waged with vigour through the press and in the Presbyteries and Synods of the Church. A "Statement" was drawn up by Dr. Horatius Bonar on behalf of those who were now styled the Anti-Union party, and was published as a pamphlet. This was replied to by Dr. Rainy, and I replied to him.

Before this time there had been begun the publication of a monthly magazine, under the title of the *Watchword*. Dr. Begg was its editor, and his conduct of it brought down upon him many reproaches and much obloquy. At this distance of time it may be freely admitted that there was in it little —too little—of the *suaviter in modo*. But the contributors to it honestly believed that their brethren were prepared to sacrifice vital truth; and with this belief they expressed themselves in terms that could not fail to be distasteful to their opponents. The editor did not write much for it; but he never shrank from responsibility for its contents.

The matter was copiously discussed in the Church-courts throughout the country, and when the Assembly met in 1868 a large number of overtures came up from these courts,

either expressing disapprobation of the action of last Assembly, or urging greater caution in the prosecution of the Union negotiations; and when the Assembly met, an apparently pacific motion was submitted by Dr. Buchanan, to the effect that no judgment should be pronounced on the question of Union until the whole subject should have been considered and reported on by the Committee, and in the meantime that there should be much earnest prayer for wisdom to be vouchsafed to the Committee in their deliberations and actings. This would have been all well—all that could have been desired—but for the resolution of last year. But it was felt by those who opposed that action that it had gone very far towards the decision of the whole question. Accordingly, Dr. Wood moved in effect that that action should be set aside, or at least that the deliberations of the Committee should be conducted without reference to it. I took it on myself to propose what I hoped would be a healing motion, stating that I would press it only in the event of its being accepted by both parties. In point of fact it was accepted by neither. I therefore withdrew it, and the vote was taken between Dr. Buchanan's motion and Dr. Wood's, when the former was carried by a majority of 322 (427–105). Dr. Begg's speech in support of Dr. Wood's motion was a telling one, touching on many points, and dwelling especially on the duty of the Free Church to insist upon the obligation of the State to acknowledge and defend, and in certain circumstances to endow, the Church of Christ—a duty all the more incumbent on her now that she had no direct interest in the endowments. It is noticeable that now, for the first time, he did not express the hope which he had repeatedly stated before, that Union might be eventually effected. Indeed it is manifest that he had now abandoned the hope of a Union on terms in which he could acquiesce.

In the Assembly of 1869 the motion made by Principal Fairbairn on behalf of the Union Committee was to the effect

that the Assembly should simply receive the Report, and without expressing any opinion as to the matters contained in it, should publish it for the information of the Church, in order that the minds of the people might be intelligently prepared for such action as might ultimately be taken. This was certainly a plausible proposal, which it was very difficult for any one to oppose without incurring the reproach of objecting to free discussion by the people of a question in which they were vitally interested. Dr. Nixon manfully faced this difficulty, and moved that, on the ground of serious differences of opinion "as to whether and how far the results arrived at concern the doctrines of Scripture and of the Church to which we have all given our adherence, . . . no further steps be taken until negotiations can be renewed with due regard to the Scriptural principles and the peace of the Church." His chief argument in support of his motion is to the effect that even the "Articles of Agreement" are framed on the principle of compromise, terms being employed which may be understood by different parties in somewhat different senses. His speech was a very masterly one. But perhaps the most telling speech on that side was that of Dr. Horatius Bonar. So far as I know he was the first, and in that speech, to intimate distinctly that Union on the terms proposed could only be accomplished at the cost of disruption. "Sir (he said), if these articles are accepted, if a new Church is based upon them, I for one can be neither a minister nor a member of such a Church. They exclude me—and I speak, I daresay, for others; but they exclude myself certainly. If I am a Free Churchman—if I maintain Free Church principles, as I have done all along—I would on no consideration be a minister of a Church based on such articles as these." Dr. Begg spoke briefly but forcibly. The motion of Dr. Fairbairn was, of course, carried by the "overwhelming majority" of 340 (429–89).

The Assembly of 1870 was, in its action on this matter,

little more than a repetition of that of 1869. Before the discussion began Dr. Gibson read a protest against it. I have already stated my belief that tabling a "protest" instead of a "dissent" *after* the discussion and vote of 1867 was of doubtful competency and doubtful expediency. But I have no doubt that a protest against the discussion *before* it was entered on was expedient, and was the only competent course. It devolved on me to vindicate this course. A very short speech of mine is reported in the *Blue Book*:—"Dr. Thomas Smith supported Dr. Moody-Stuart's motion, and in the course of his remarks maintained that the importance of the protest lodged by Dr. Gibson had been unfairly, however unintentionally, exaggerated. Those who considered that the question proposed to be submitted to Presbyteries involved a change in the fundamental constitution of the Church were shut up to one or other of two courses of action. If they had simply entered on the discussion of the question, it was not altogether inconceivable that they might have been in a minority. But in that event it would certainly have been urged against them that they had accepted the issue, and must abide by it. This they could not do. They must therefore either decline to take any part in the discussion, or they must take part in it under the protection of such a protest as had been lodged. It would have been deeply painful if this house had been emptied when the debate came on, and if the party to which he belonged had retired to the refreshment room, or remained sulkily in their seats and allowed the discussion to go on without taking part in it. He was sure that either of these courses would have been more distasteful to their friends on the other side than that which they had actually adopted." The Moderator, in his closing address, referred in complimentary terms to my vindication of the protest, and seemed to represent it as quite satisfactory. But the protest was regarded by those on the other side as preparing the way for a lawsuit respecting the property of

the Church—a perfectly legitimate process according to Free Church principles—and so regarded it as in some sort a threat. It doubtless had a good deal to do with the irritation which, more than on previous occasions, was manifested in the debate. The motions were made by Dr. Candlish and Dr. Moody-Stuart respectively; and the debate was very able. Dr. Begg spoke with great earnestness and power, "sparing no arrows," and defying the interruptions alike of "house" and gallery. At some parts of his speech, when he spoke of the probability of disruption, he was greatly affected, and evoked the sympathy of his strongest opponents. The result of the vote was as usual—a majority of 235 (379–144) in favour of Dr. Candlish's motion. No doubt the situation was greatly in favour of the Unionists. The motion of Dr. Candlish pronounced nothing in favour of Union; it simply asked Presbyteries to consider whether there were any bar in principle to the formation of a Union on the basis of the Confession of Faith as accepted by the negotiating Churches. The resolution of the Assembly pronounced no judgment whatever on this point, and, further, "declared that, apart from the consideration of principle, the entire question of the propriety or expediency of the Union contemplated, as well as the time and manner of effecting it, is, and must be held to be, reserved." Dr. Moody-Stuart was shut up to moving that the question ought not to be brought under the consideration of Presbyteries at all. Thus the strongest "Anti-Unionist," and all who were doubtful or undecided, could vote for Dr. Candlish, while no Unionist could vote for Dr. Moody-Stuart. I have no doubt that a considerable number of Dr. Candlish's supporters would have refused to say that they were prepared to go into the Union. Still, it were vain to deny that the large majority was mainly composed of those who had made up their minds as to the propriety of the Union.

The year between the Assembly of 1870 and that of 1871 was a period of intense excitement and keen agitation. Public

meetings were held throughout the country for and against the Union proposed. In the latter class of meetings Dr. Begg was, of course, the speaker most sought after. He laboured incessantly and spoke most eloquently. Although in some cases attempts were made, with some measure of success, to swamp the meetings and carry counter-resolutions, yet upon the whole the campaign was a success, and went far to confirm the view which Dr. Begg constantly expressed, that the Union feeling was by no means so strong in the minds of the people as in those of the ministers and elders who constituted the "overwhelming majorities" in the General Assembly.

The motion submitted by Sir Henry Moncreiff, seconded by Dr. Candlish, to the Assembly of 1871 was a virtual abandonment of the Union proposal. Its main paragraph was the following:—

"III. That while this large measure of agreement among the negotiating Churches with respect to the proposed basis of Union, in so far as the question of principle is concerned, appears to the Assembly amply to justify the confident expectation that the Lord will, in His own good time, bring the contemplated Union to pass, they willingly acknowledge that much consideration is due to the difficulties which still appear to an important minority of esteemed and honoured brethren to stand in its way. In this spirit, accordingly, and having respect to the great desirableness of affording adequate opportunity to all parties calmly and fully to weigh the whole import and bearing of the opinion pronounced by the Presbyteries, and to consider the position and duty of the Church in connection therewith, the Assembly, in reappointing the Committee, as they now do, instruct them, instead of proceeding to the further consideration of any of the matters outstanding under the programme of Heads of Inquiry, to direct their attention for the present to those measures which may seem best fitted to draw the negotiating Churches into closer and more friendly relations to one another, to encourage and facilitate their cordial co-operation, and thus, while allaying the heat and irritation of controversy, to cultivate that more intimate knowledge of each other, and to call forth and

cherish those mutual sympathies and kindly feelings which cannot fail, under God, to promote that seeing eye to eye, and that coming to be of one heart and of one soul which is the needful and fitting preparation for the more perfect union, and with a view to which those profoundly important negotiations have all along been carried on; and further, it is the desire and intention of the Assembly that the Committee reappointed for these purposes should be so enlarged as to be in harmony with the ends in view."

It was certainly difficult to frame a motion in opposition to this proposal. Had one word in it been omitted or changed it would have been both impossible and unnecessary. Had the motion expressed only the hope and expectation that God will, in His good time, bring *Union* to pass, Dr. Begg and his friends would have added to it their hearty Amen. But they had neither the expectation nor the desire that *the contemplated Union* should ever be brought about. Dr. Nixon, therefore, moved in substance, that the Committee be discharged. Dr. Begg spoke with great energy in opposition to Sir Henry Moncreiff's motion, and when it was carried by the usual majority of 270 (435–165), he handed in a protest signed by fifty-three ministers and fifty-six elders. From the *Blue Book* I see that I did not sign this protest, but gave in a dissent, "to which," says the *Blue Book*, "Dr. Begg and others adhered." At this distance of time I do not remember the precise ground on which I declined to sign the protest. I suppose it must have been simply that a protest was not the proper form of dissenting from a resolution that had been passed, however appropriate it might be as against the discussion of a particular question. But I find that I signed a similar protest in the following year.

The Union Committee came to the conclusion to recommend a plan for the allowance of the transfer of ministers from charges in the one Church to charges in the other; and a measure of this kind was adopted by the United Presbyterian Synod. When it came to be known that this was to

be proposed to the Assembly it gave rise to great opposition, and a petition against it was laid on the table of the Assembly with some 70,000 signatures. When the motion was made in the Assembly of 1872 by Dr. Adam, it was strongly insisted on by him and others, that I was committed to such a scheme in a pamphlet which I had published some years earlier (see p. 502), and, to a certain extent, Dr. Begg and others with whom I generally acted were committed also, inasmuch as, although I had stated in the pamphlet that, while they were not responsible for the contents, I believed that they would substantially agree with them, they had not formally repudiated them. Now it was true that I had propounded a scheme of mutual eligibility more extensive than that now proposed. It was true that there was no formal repudiation, because there was no notice of the proposal taken by those on the other side, who at that time, and for long after, would think of nothing short of incorporation. But even in these circumstances, the *Watchword*, while highly commending the pamphlet generally, had distinctly stated that in this particular proposal its author had gone too far. There was, therefore, no inconsistency on the part of Dr. Begg and others in opposing now what they had never supported—what, indeed, they had dissented from so far as there was any occasion to express dissent or assent. My own consistency must be vindicated, if at all, on other grounds. The ground that satisfies myself, and which, I think, ought to satisfy others, is that the circumstances were entirely changed. When the proposal was made, it had never been questioned that there was an essential difference between the views of United Presbyterians and Free Churchmen regarding the proper relation between Church and State. But I knew, and was glad to know, that there were some in the United Presbyterian Church whose views were much nearer to those of the Free Church than were those of most of their brethren; and I knew, and was sorry to know, that there were some in the

Free Church who, without being Voluntaries, were not so strong anti-Voluntaries as most of us. My proposal accordingly was, that a door should be opened through which those exceptional men might pass. But the assumption now was, that there was no difference of any consequence between the Churches; that every Free Churchman might become a United Presbyterian, and that every United Presbyterian might become a Free Churchman, without any inconsistency. It was on this assumption that Dr. Adam and his supporters advocated *their* Mutual Eligibility scheme, and the fact that it could be so advocated showed that, with whatever external resemblance, it was a totally different scheme from mine.

Counter-motions were made by Dr. Samuel Miller and by Dr. Couper of Burntisland; the final vote being taken between Dr. Adam's and Dr. Miller's motions, the former was carried by a majority of 197 (369–172).

A keen agitation was kept up throughout the ensuing year, in which Dr Begg took a leading part. It is no secret now that the opinions of eminent lawyers were obtained as to the disposal of the property of the Church in the event of the policy of the majority being carried to its legitimate conclusion. Meantime various conferences were held between several men on both sides in order to ascertain whether a solution of the difficulty might yet be possible. I remember one, for example, arranged by Mr. MacEwan on the one side, and Dr. Maclachlan on the other; and Dr. Main afterwards stated that he had correspondence with Dr. Buchanan with the same view. When the Assembly of 1873 drew near, it was fully expected that a disruption of the Free Church was to ensue. As it was agreed that Dr. Duff was to be Moderator of that Assembly, and as there was almost daily intercourse between him and me, of course we often spoke of the subject of which our hearts were full. I often stated what I regarded as the minimum of concession essential to prevent a disruption. He repeatedly urged me to put it into writing.

I repeatedly refused, but was at last over-persuaded. When I submitted to the leading members of my own party the letter which I had written, and which Dr. Duff had had put in type, they almost unanimously disapproved, not so much of its matter, as of my having consented to write on the subject at all. Some of them expressed their disapprobation in very strong terms. Meantime paragraphs got into the newspapers as to disunion in the Anti-Union camp, Dr. Samuel Miller, Dr. Moody-Stuart, and I being freely named as refusing to go with Dr. Begg into a disruption. We regarded these paragraphs as simple "feelers," put in by reporters who had been baffled in their attempts to get information, and hoping that such statements would "draw" us out. We therefore agreed to take no notice of them.

When the Assembly met, Dr. Candlish moved that the overture which had been sent down to Presbyteries under the Barrier Act, in accordance with Dr. Adam's motion, should be passed into a standing law. Dr. Nixon moved, in opposition, that certain alterations should be made in it, with the view of securing that ministers of the United Presbyterian Church, before being called to charges in the Free Church, should be required to make a statement as to the sense in which they understood the declarations which they would be required to sign if they accepted the call. Dr. Candlish, in making his motion, expressed in extremely strong terms the impossibility of accepting Dr. Nixon's motion, of which notice had been given. I took an early opportunity of speaking in the debate, and while, of course, supporting Dr. Nixon's motion, suggested some modifications in the line of my letter to Dr. Duff. The debate went on, and there seemed no prospect of any satisfactory solution of the difficulty, which all felt to be extreme. I had better give the account of what followed in the words of a newspaper of the day. In its summary of the proceedings the *Daily Review* wrote:—

"Dr. Thomas Smith tried hard to conciliate both sides, and

with more success than usually attends efforts of this description; for his suggestion was adopted by Dr. Candlish, who, at the opening of the evening sederunt, added to his motion, that the Presbytery, after finding the call to a minister of another Church to be regular, should adjourn for a fortnight, or not more than four weeks, transmitting the formula, &c., to the minister called, and informing him that, unless they hear to the contrary, they will assume that he has no difficulty." This is a very meagre statement of the matter. What induced the minority to accept Dr. Candlish's proposal was, that it includes the transmission of important documents which the *Daily Review* refers to merely as "&c." Dr. Begg, while stating that he thought the motion, thus modified, "afforded materials for a satisfactory adjustment," asked that time should be given for consideration. The Assembly therefore adjourned, and on its meeting next morning Dr. Nixon and Dr. Begg stated their acceptance of it, to the unspeakable joy of the Assembly and the Church. The motion was passed without a vote, the minority recording their dissent, though only on minor points and on technical grounds. Of course it was a compromise. Neither party professed to like it. It was a generous concession on the part of Dr. Candlish and his friends, and it delivered his opponents from what they knew would be a dire calamity. I conclude this brief narrative by quoting the words of my revered and beloved father, Dr. Duff:—"The Moderator then said, 'This matter having been now so singularly settled, contrary to the expectations of most, I think, as more than one member has avowed, and I myself endeavoured in prayer to acknowledge, that it is the doing of the Lord, and wondrous in our eyes. I am sure I express the mind of the whole Assembly when I say that the right way to conclude this matter would be for the Moderator of the Assembly to ask one on either side to thank God. I would ask my dear old friend, Dr. Julius Wood, to return thanks." Devotional

exercises were then conducted by Dr. Julius Wood and Dr. Charles J. Brown. Like prayers and thanksgivings ascended that night from thousands of the homes of our people.

The matter required to go once more to the Presbyteries under the Barrier Act, but it was a matter of course that it should safely pass this ordeal. Accordingly, at next Assembly, the Committee for classing returns to overtures reported that it had been approved "almost unanimously" by the Presbyteries; and so, without a single observation—so far as appears from the *Blue Book*—it was passed into a standing law. Thus ended a controversy which had threatened to rend the Free Church. It is not to be questioned that the beginning of the Union movement was of God; and I firmly believe that its ending was of God, however in its beginning, its progress, and its end human imperfections may have marred it.

It ought to be mentioned that before the decision of 1873 had been reached, preparations had been made, in anticipation of a different decision, for a disruption. In these preparations Dr. Begg of course took a leading part. Shortly afterwards he published a volume,[1] in which he gives an account of some of these preparations. It is to be hoped that the future proceedings may necessitate reference to this volume, and to the opinions of Counsel, of which it is mainly composed.

[1] "Memorial, with the Opinions of Eminent Counsel in regard to the Constitution of the Free Church of Scotland; and Remarks on our Present State and Prospects. By James Begg, D.D. Edinburgh, 1874."

CHAPTER LVII.

VISIT TO AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, CEYLON, AND INDIA —VOYAGING EXPERIENCES—PATRONAGE ABOLITION ACT—HOUSE ACCOMMODATION—GIFT OF MONEY—PRESBYTERIAN RECONSTRUCTION.

EXTRACT from the Minutes of the Deacons' Court of Newington:—

"At Newington Free Church, 4th June 1873. . . . The Moderator at some length explained to the Court the nature and bearing of the decision of the last General Assembly of the Free Church in reference to the Mutual Eligibility question, by which the Church has so long been agitated, at the same time expressing his thankfulness at the peaceful and satisfactory solution of the difficulty. He also stated his intention (*D.V.*) of gratifying a wish he had long cherished, to visit New Zealand, three of his sons being resident in that distant colony. The Court having expressed their cordial sympathy with their beloved pastor in his desire to see once more those who were so near and dear to him, resolved that no effort would be wanting on their part to maintain in efficiency, during his absence, all the machinery connected with the congregation. Messrs. Robertson and Graham were appointed a committee to act along with the Moderator in making arrangements for supplying the pulpit."

On the 25th of June Dr. Begg made application to the Presbytery for leave of absence "for about seven months." This was cordially granted, several members of Presbytery expressing their willingness to render aid in conducting the services at Newington during his absence. At his request,

Dr. Smeaton was appointed to act as interim Moderator of Session.

On the 23d of July Dr. Begg embarked in the steamship *Somersetshire*. I have before me a log of the voyage, apparently kept by an officer of the ship, and presented to Dr. Begg. It contains nothing but the latitude and the longitude and the "run" for each day, and the texts from which Dr. B. and J. M. (whom I conclude from other sources to have been a Wesleyan Methodist minister) preached on the morning and afternoon of each Sabbath, and on each Wednesday evening. It appears that the *Somersetshire* accomplished a run of 12,600 miles in sixty-three days, exactly 200 miles a day on an average. It seems to me to have been altogether a mistake to make so short a stay in the southern colonies as Dr. Begg made. He saw nothing of Australia outside of Melbourne, nothing of New Zealand beyond the circumference of a very small circle, with Otago for its centre. Returning by the mail route, he spent a day in Ceylon and a week at Bombay. He passed through the Suez Canal, landed at Alexandria, visited Cairo and the Pyramids, and was in Edinburgh on the 23d of February 1874—the day on which his leave of absence expired. Short—far too short—as the trip was, Dr. Begg was one of the ablest of all men to make the most of it. He did good and got good. Everywhere he met with an enthusiastic reception. He preached to large and deeply interested congregations. He expounded his views as to capital and labour, religious education, Home Rule for Scotland, and the bothy system. His interest was greatly quickened in our Colonial and Foreign Missions; indeed, from this time there disappeared from his mind what I had often regretted, a want of appreciation of the importance of the missionary work of the Church of Christ, the evangelistic as compared with the evangelical or pastoral department. Not that he was ever indifferent to the former; and many a time, when I spoke to him on the subject, he

would frankly acknowledge its vast importance, but would intimate that he considered that his duty lay in another direction. The mere sight of heathenism stirred the depths of his strong heart; and henceforth missions to the heathen occupied a far more prominent place in his sympathies and his prayers.

At a meeting of the Newington congregation, held on the 26th of February to welcome him back, he delivered a long and most interesting address, which was afterwards published as a pamphlet. I have before me also a speech delivered by him at an "entertainment" given in his honour on the eve of his leaving Otago. In these speeches he goes back to the old happy strain which had been in abeyance during the painful contests in which he had been engaged during the last ten years. The speeches do indeed contain much wise counsel and many shrewd observations. But the wisdom and the observations I shall leave alone, and shall content myself with picking out a few "bits" of humour. Speaking of the vague ideas that people who have never left home have of the position and relative distances of places in "foreign parts," he said:—"It is told of a Highlandman that he went to the first house in Athol Crescent, Edinburgh, and asked, 'Is this Edinburgh?' 'Yes,' was the reply, whereupon the Highlandman asked, 'Is our Donald in?'"

Describing his preaching on board ship, he had a good hit at his "reading" friends. "I have been the minister, I may say, to some extent, of a floating chapel in my absence, and I was extremely glad that I had familiarised myself with the habit of speaking without the assistance of notes, because it would have been extremely difficult, in many of the circumstances in which I was placed, to use notes. I had very often to lash a chair against a fixed table, and to hold on while the ship was moving under the power of winds and waves—in fact, as I said when I came back from America after similar experience, it was difficult sometimes to know which end of my congregation was uppermost."

Speaking of a collection for the hospital at Melbourne, he said:—"What struck me most was, that forty-five of these pounds were in silver and five in gold, and that there was just one penny in the plate. I have heard of a minister who said with Paul, 'Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil.' A minister cannot say so in that country, for, as far as I understand, there is very little copper put into the plate."

The following is a good example of the happy way in which he could utilise the tritest Joe Miller:—"The Highlanders are so successful, that a Chinaman making application for some employment called himself Macpherson. The people were astonished. They asked what the meaning of it was. The reply of the Chinaman was, that there was no use of making application except men were Scotch." This is, of course, introduced in the course of a panegyric on John Knox and Scriptural education.

I cannot but regret the brevity of this visit to the antipodes and to India. But, short as it was, Dr. Begg both did and got a considerable amount of good in the course of it. He never had much power of realising an abstract idea, but what he saw made an ineffaceable impression on him.

It should be noticed that it was during Dr. Begg's absence that the Church was deprived of Dr. Candlish, a man of unique endowments of head and heart; a man whom it was scarcely possible either to admire or to love otherwise than extremely. None admired him more, few loved him more, than did Dr. Begg. It was a precious lesson to younger men to see how these champions bore themselves towards each other when they agreed and when they differed. Dr. Candlish died on the 19th of October 1873.

It goes without saying that Dr. Begg without delay resumed his pastoral, ecclesiastical, and social work, with, if possible, increased zeal. It was a matter of course that, with such a congregation as that of Newington, and such a minister as Dr. Begg, "absence made their hearts grow

fonder;" while the position of ecclesiastical affairs in Scotland was such as to call forth all his energies. It was the time when the Patronage Abolition Bill was under discussion. He had always regarded the Patronage Act of 1711–12 as the primary cause of the ecclesiastical divisions in our country. And so far he was undoubtedly right, that, had that Act not existed, neither the Secession in 1732 nor the Disruption in 1843 could have taken place *on the grounds on which they actually took place.* But perhaps he overlooked the fact that these great movements were the result of opposing views and currents of thought, which would probably have issued in secession and disruption although there had been no Patronage Act and no Patronage. At all events, he did very earnestly desire the abolition of that Act, and consented to hold various conferences with leading men in the Established Church on the subject. It was known that such conferences were held, and it was freely said that he and others were contemplating a return to the Establishment. I am in a position to state authoritatively that these surmises were altogether unwarranted. He did, indeed, long for a healing of the ecclesiastical breaches in Scotland, and regarded the passing of the Act of 1874 as the first step in a process which might ultimately lead to that result. But he never expected that that process would attain to maturity in his day, and he never thought of the accession of himself and other Free Churchmen to the Established Church, as individuals or as individual congregations, as desirable or possible. He thoroughly believed, however, in the integrity of Lord Advocate Gordon—as every one who knew him believed—and in the truthfulness of his oft-repeated assertion, that his object in the Patronage Abolition Bill was not the strengthening of the Establishment by weakening the other denominations, but the formation of a ground on which all the denominations might honourably stand together. Apart altogether from constitutional principles, he regarded

the Established Church as having gone much further than the Free Church had then gone on the "down-grade" in respect of purity of worship and soundness of doctrine; and this would have been quite sufficient to constitute an insuperable obstacle in the way of his entering it. In fact, he felt more and more that, however little he was in sympathy with the "overwhelming majorities" in the General Assembly of the Free Church, he was less in sympathy with the prevalent current of thought in the Established Church. He never made a secret of it that he held that in our country there ought to be an Established Church, and that he desired that that Church should be such that the Free Church might, without compromise, be included in it. Even if he had ever entertained the idea of returning to the Established Church, apart from the Free Church—as he never did—he must have known that such a movement would have separated him from his chief personal friends and his chief ecclesiastical supporters. He knew very well that the Highlanders would not have joined him in such a movement. With all this, he never shrank from the assertion of anti-Voluntary principles, nor from the admission that, other things being equal, he would rather belong to an established than an unestablished Church. But he did not consider other things to be equal.[1]

It was fitting that he should begin his public work in connection with the Scottish Reformation Society. He spoke at its annual meeting in March, and showed that his eyes had been open to mark the action of Romanism in the lands which he had visited.

In the same month I find him addressing the following circular to all the Provosts of Scotland:—

[1] I may say, once for all, that he occupied essentially the same ground during all the rest of his life. When, from time to time, he spoke in anger or in sorrow of what he regarded as defections of his own Church, he was taunted with hankering after a return to the Establishment; and these taunts drove him to make the strongest possible statements in condemnation of what he considered the greater defections of the Establishment.

"The Rev. Dr. Begg presents his compliments to the Provost of ——, and begs his acceptance of two copies of 'Happy Homes for Working Men, and How to Get them,' one of which he may perhaps be good enough to retain for himself, while he gives orders that the other may be placed in any public library accessible to the working classes. Dr. Begg is aware that in this he takes a great liberty; but he hopes that this will be excused in consequence of the great importance of the subject discussed, and because the thousand houses built and possessed by the working men of Edinburgh prove that the problem has been and may be completely solved. The plan described in this volume is capable of universal application, and a little encouragement from our public authorities, such as they must be ready to give, might go far, in these days of more influence and larger wages on the part of the working classes, both to arrest the unwise expenditure of money, and to secure for them, by the Divine blessing, such comfortable homes as would be a great advantage both to themselves and the general community."

I have already hinted that Dr. Begg probably took a somewhat too sanguine view of this matter. The movement was good in Edinburgh, and was necessary, mainly as a counteraction to the immoderately high house-rents. It was shown that houses could be bought for a price and let for a rent, the latter of which would be 13, or even 15, per cent. on the former, while money could be borrowed, on reasonable security, at five per cent. Clearly this state of things could not continue. I remember saying to Dr. Begg that I regarded the indirect effects of his scheme, in compelling house-proprietors to reduce exorbitant rents, as more valuable than its direct results. If this were so, then the scheme would not be "capable of universal application," nor would it need to be universally applied. It was a fairly good means of counteracting a great evil. But the evil was not universal, and the remedy did not need to be so.

Apart from its passing into a standing law, the Mutual Eligibility overture of the previous year, and discussion on

the Patronage Bill then before Parliament, and on the question of Disestablishment, the Assembly of 1874 was not one of special importance. On the last-mentioned subject, Dr. Begg supported a motion by Sir Henry Moncreiff in opposition to that by Dr. Adam. In closing his speech he said:—"It had been said that he was taking unpopular ground. But he did not care for that. He had generally occupied unpopular ground all his days; but he comforted himself with this, that minorities had been as frequently right as wrong since the days of Noah." Of course he was in a minority on the present occasion, Dr. Adam's motion being carried by the usual "overwhelming majority," (295 – 98 = 197)—three to one, and one to spare. His recent return from the southern colonies and from India pointed him out to the Conveners of the Colonial and Foreign Missions Committees for moving the deliverances of the Assembly on their reports. He did so; and spoke on both subjects in his finest vein, carrying with him the enthusiastic sympathy of the Assembly. He was not in a minority on these occasions.

Before Dr. Begg's departure for Australia, some of his friends thought of expressing their sense of his merits by contributing a sum sufficient to pay his passage-money. But they found that this would by no means satisfy the desires of his numerous admirers and friends. It was therefore resolved to utilise the period of his absence so as to be able to present him, on his return, with a substantial gift. Accordingly he was presented with a cheque for about £5000. The fact that in the list of subscribers to this testimonial were the names of many members of the Established Church was, of course, laid hold of by his enemies as a proof that he was preparing to join the Establishment, to betray the Free Church, and to do all manner of unseemly deeds. These things certainly annoyed our friend. But they did not move him from his steadfastness in pursuing the course which he deemed right. In the Church-courts during the year 1874–5, and in the

Assembly of 1875, he repeatedly stated and defended his position with reference to the Established Church. He steadfastly maintained that it is desirable that the Presbyterian bodies be united on terms which shall recognise the duty of the nation and its rulers to uphold and maintain the cause of Christ. He maintained that one obstacle to such union had been removed by the repeal of the Act of Queen Anne, which had been an important occasion of the disunion. He held that there still remained other obstacles, of whose removal he saw little prospect, though he did not regard it as hopeless; and that the present duty of the Free Church was to maintain the ground which she occupied in 1843, protesting against Erastianism on the one hand, and against Voluntaryism on the other. In the Assembly of 1875 he moved as follows:—

"(1.) That it is the duty of this Church to maintain the whole principles contended for at the time of the Disruption, rejecting Erastianism on the one hand, and Voluntaryism on the other. (2.) That the recent legislation in regard to Patronage in the Established Church of Scotland, while an important tribute to the principles maintained in 1843, and whilst removing a leading cause of division among the Presbyterians of Scotland, makes it hopeful that all the other causes of division may yet, by the Divine blessing, be removed; that the Presbyterians of Scotland may be reunited upon Reformation principles; and that, according to the anticipation of the Claim of Right, the great advantages of the parochial system, adapted to existing circumstances, with the public funds devoted in former times to Christian objects, together with the continual 'oblations of the faithful,' may be brought to bear upon the spiritual instruction of our whole people, and especially with blessed effect upon the neglected places of the land and of the world, and that 'we and our posterity after us may as brethren live in faith and love, and that the Lord may delight to dwell in the midst of us.'"

As this is the last occasion on which I shall refer to Dr. Begg's views or action with respect to this matter, I may perhaps be pardoned if I digress to the extent of stating in a

few sentences my own conviction as to the course which ought to be followed in regard to it. The Legislature ought to declare—(1.) That it is their duty to promote the cause of Christ, and to aid in the support of His Church. (2.) That it were neither right nor expedient to alienate or secularise the funds which were set apart in former days for the endowment of the Church. (3.) That those funds were set apart for the endowment of Presbyterianism, and belong to the Presbyterians of Scotland. (4.) That arrangements for the allocation of these funds, which were applicable to a former state of matters, are not applicable now, when there are several bodies of Presbyterians, only one of which is deriving the benefit of that which, by right, is the common property of them all. (5.) That as vacancies occur in the parishes of Scotland the endowments shall be taken into a general fund.[1] (6.) That this fund shall be administered by commissioners, and distributed as "grants in aid" to Presbyterian congregations. (7.) That these grants shall be given for a limited number of years—five or seven—but shall be renewable at the judgment of the commissioners.

All that I should ask of the supreme courts of the present non-established Churches is, that they should simply do nothing in the matter, but should leave it optional to their congregations to accept grants or decline them, as I believe they do now with respect to the grants of the Ferguson bequest. Of course there would need to be details about churches, manses, glebes, and unexhausted teinds. With respect to the last, I would confer on the commissioners the same rights to sue for augmentations that now pertain to individual ministers of the Established Church.

I believe that this scheme, if it were adopted, would have the effect of making the Free Church virtually the Established Church over a great part of the Highlands, as it ought

[1] Or, perhaps better, into several funds, according to civil or ecclesiastical divisions, counties, or Synods.—T. S.

to be. It is very different from the scheme that was outlined by my late noble friend, Dr. John Kennedy; but I know that he would have hailed it as a great boon. So would Dr. Begg. Another effect of it would be the suppression of charges where they are too numerous, and the setting free of funds for the establishment of charges in destitute districts. It would afford facilities for co-operation, without involving any of the Churches in such responsibility for the views or actings of the others as would be involved in any incorporative Union. Of such Union I confess that I see no near prospect. Of this I am sure, that simple Disestablishment, as advocated by the Liberation Society, as it has been for a long time advocated consistently by the United Presbyterians, and as it is now advocated most inconsistently by the Courts of the Free Church, would make that prospect still more remote. It would produce a feeling of irritation and a sense of wrong in the minds of the members of the disestablished Church which would not end with the actual members, but would be transmitted to their successors. This would be imputed by their opponents to simple unreasonableness, and so on both sides the feelings unfavourable to Union would be intensified.

Although the Union negotiations did not lead to union with the United Presbyterians, they did lead to an enhancement of the respect and esteem in which Free Churchmen have ever held the members of that Church. And they led also to the formation of a happy union with the Reformed Presbyterian Church. Never was Dr. Begg more in his element than when, on the 25th of May 1876, he took a prominent part in the proceedings in which that union was consummated. His speech on that occasion was in his happiest vein, and was perhaps the most popular of all the speeches—and they were many and excellent—that were delivered on that happy occasion.

CHAPTER LVIII.

EDINBURGH SCHOOL BOARD—FAILURE OF HEALTH—ROBERTSON SMITH CASE—JUBILEE CELEBRATION—INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC—STROME-FERRY RIOTS—THE END.

THE second election of the Edinburgh School Board took place in April 1876. Dr. Begg was asked by many of his friends to allow himself to be proposed as a candidate, and consented somewhat reluctantly, because he foresaw that the right discharge of the duties would be a heavy tax on his time and strength. At the request of his proposers I acted as chairman of his committee. Many meetings were held in the several districts of the city, at which Dr. Begg stated clearly and forcibly his views respecting the educational questions of the day. A tacit understanding was come to between our committee and that of the supporters of candidates belonging to the Established Church, so that it was understood that it would be desirable that Dr. Begg's supporters and Mr. Williamson's should to a certain extent endeavour to carry both. The usual amount of newspaper controversy ensued. The two leading daily newspapers were opposed to Dr. Begg—the one as the consistent advocate of non-sectarian education, the other because it perceived that Dr. Begg's success would involve the defeat of a candidate whom it greatly preferred. But the controversy was conducted mainly in the correspondence columns. These contained, morning after morning, effusions whose chief characteristic was abuse of Dr. Begg. This did not greatly move him, as he had by this time had the same experience of it that eels

are said to have of vivisection, with this advantage over them, that his experience was personal, while theirs is only racial. The election took place on the 8th of April, and the result was announced on the 10th. To the great joy, and somewhat to the surprise, of his friends, and to the mortification, and probably the surprise, of his opponents, Dr. Begg headed the poll by an "overwhelming majority." On announcing to him this result, I could not resist the temptation to a little quiet banter, contrasting his 19,929 supporters among the Edinburgh electors with the seven who in all the world supported truth in Noah's day. There was another matter from which his friends afterwards extracted a good deal of harmless amusement. In the voting schedule the names of the candidates were printed in large capitals and arranged in alphabetical order. The portion of the schedule with which we have now to do stood thus:—

2. BEGG, Rev. JAMES, D.D.
12. RIGG, Rev. G., Catholic clergyman.

The Romanists were instructed "to plump" for Mr. Rigg. Now, the literates among them had, of course, no difficulty, nor had the absolutely illiterate, for they gave their votes vocally. But there was a middle class, who could not claim the privilege of the illiterate, and who could not be very safely trusted to discharge the functions of the literate. It was said that meetings of these were held, and that by the aid of a black-board and chalk they were instructed in the art of distinguishing the name of "his reverence." It was said that in the polling-booth many, when they came to the second name in the schedule, and saw the large B, which is not much unlike a large R, and the two large G's, followed by *Rev.*, thought that they had found the name with whose literal representation they had been familiarised by the black-board, and joyously recorded their fifteen votes for Dr. Begg! It is very likely that this did take place in some few instances;

and it is quite true that Dr. Begg had more votes and Mr. Rigg had fewer than their respective supporters expected. But Dr. Begg's majority over Mr. Rigg was 1614, and it is scarcely conceivable that 807 made this mistake. But it was too good a joke for his friends to lose, that he was put at the head of the poll by the Romanist vote!

It needs not be said that Dr. Begg discharged his duty faithfully as a member of the Board; and I have understood that his services in various departments were important. One of his colleagues some years ago published a book of anecdotes.[1] I extract from it the following. It may be fairly presumed that the other actor in the scene was Dr. Adamson himself:—

"The Rev. Dr. Begg was a man of determination and activity. He took an active part in many public movements, and was a member of various committees and boards. He had also the courage of his opinions, and was a powerful debater in ecclesiastical courts and elsewhere. When a member of the Edinburgh School Board, he had an earnest and animated discussion on one occasion on the subject of temperance, in which he contended, in opposition to another member, that alcohol was not poison, but a good creature of God. The contention was a little sharp on both sides, and feelings were considerably aroused. When the meeting was over, the Doctor left the room with his opponent, and they had not gone far when they were overtaken by a heavy shower of rain. They sought shelter in a passage at hand, and were enjoying a quiet crack, when a lady member of the Board made her appearance. When she saw the two former disputants in cheery converse, she held up her hands in astonishment, and said, 'If it had been two ladies who had differed as much as you two did an hour ago, they would not have spoken to one another for years.' 'Ah,' said the Doctor, 'that would have been far wrong. I never allow feelings of a personal kind to enter into my public life, when I know others are as honest as myself. Fifty years

[1] "The Religious Anecdotes of Scotland. Edited by William Adamson, D.D., Edinburgh.—London, 1885."

ago, and more, my father said to me, "Now, James, you are going into the world to mingle with men who have as good a right to have their opinions as you have. When they differ from you, treat them with respect, and after the discussion is over, let the whole be ended. Act on this principle, James, and you will prevent much mischief, and much pain to yourself." I have always endeavoured to act thus, and I have found it a good plan.' Dr. Begg then hailed a cab, and the two went home together."

This combination of hard hitting, by tongue or pen, in public controversy, with kindly and playful geniality in private, was a puzzle to many. Some imputed it to "thick-skinnedness," but most erroneously. He was in reality as sensitive as the generality of men. But it was the result of education, habit, and principle:—

> "In peace there's nothing so becomes a man
> As modest stillness and humility;
> But when the blast of war blows in your ear,
> Then imitate the action of the tiger."

Dr. Begg found, as he had expected, that attendance on so many meetings as were necessary in the early period of the School-Board's existence was a great drain upon his time and strength; and at the close of his three years' term of office he declined to be put in nomination for re-election. Before that time, indeed, his health had begun to decline, and I believe that the disease had set in from which he never recovered. Hence the following, which I extract from the records of the Newington Kirk-Session:—

"At Newington Free Church, the 7th day of January 1879: Which day the Session met and was constituted by prayer. Sederunt, Rev. Dr. Thomas Smith of Cowgate-Head Free Church, at the request of Dr. Begg, Moderator; Rev. Mr. Andrew, Messrs. Mackay, Chalmers, Cameron, Robertson, Lang, Scott, Church, Campbell, Gemmell, Russell, and Graham, elders.

"A communication was read from Dr. Begg, intimating his

intention, acting under medical advice, to apply to the next General Assembly for power to secure a colleague and successor, and enclosing the following medical certificate :—

"'EDINBURGH, *7th January* 1879.

"'We have medically examined the Rev. Dr. Begg, and are of opinion that the state of his health requires that he should be, as far as possible, relieved from active work and occupation for a time.

(Signed) R. CHRISTISON.
W. A. SANDERS.'

"The Court expressed their deep regret that the state of their pastor's health rendered this step necessary. They sympathise deeply with him as to the cause of his enforced absence from among them, and pray the great Head of the Church speedily to restore him to wonted health and activity."

In asking me to preside over this meeting, and over similar meetings of the Deacons' Court and congregation, Dr. Begg very earnestly requested me to make it distinctly understood that he did not contemplate any steps towards the election or call of a colleague. But he thought it desirable that the permission of the Assembly should be got, in order that delay might not intervene in the event of the necessity arising—a necessity which he did not regard as having actually arisen. This forethought was highly characteristic. The want of it has been injurious to many congregations. Without permission of the Assembly no congregation can call a colleague to their minister. Now, if a minister be taken ill shortly after one Assembly, and it be evident that a colleague must be called, while nearly a year must elapse before any action can be taken, a very undesirable state of matters ensues. Even this is not the worst. Applications for leave to call colleagues must be laid before the March Commission for transmission to the Assembly; so that the period of

inaction may extend not only from June to June, but from March to the June of the following year. In point of fact the necessity never did arise in the Newington case. I find either myself or Mr. MacEwan presiding at meetings of the Kirk-Session during the months of January and February, and on the 24th of March Dr. Begg himself presided at a meeting held in his own house. And so it continued for a long time. Never well, but seldom very ill, he did not feel that he would be justified in abandoning the work which he loved—whether pastoral or ecclesiastical—while the consciousness that he was not able to do it with his former vigour increased the depression which was a symptom of his malady. Seeing him very frequently, I did not mark the change that was gradually coming over his system. But my attention was painfully called to it. I think it must have been in the summer of 1880 that I prevailed on him to accompany me in a day's excursion into the country. The weather was perfect, and he was greatly pleased at the prospect of spending the day in an East Lothian farmhouse, and reviving the agricultural memories of his earlier days. We reached our destination about ten o'clock, walked round a hay-field, where he was intensely interested in for the first time seeing the cutting-machines at work. But all through the remainder of the day he was depressed and listless. Even a drive in the afternoon failed to rouse him, although in the course of it we passed that "Yester Gate" where John Knox was born. My attention being thus roused, I could not help afterwards seeing many indications of physical debility. It was an unspeakable comfort to his family, his congregation, and his friends, that with all this there was no apparent decay of his mental powers. If his preaching was less vigorous than in his prime, it was more spiritual, and his hearers treasure the memory of the pulpit services of his latest years as among their richest possessions. In the Church-courts he did not speak so often as in former days.

But when he did speak he displayed the same qualities which had characterised his earlier efforts—strong reasoning, fearless advocacy of what he believed to be right, and denunciation of what he regarded as wrong, caustic humour and apt illustration. But then there was this important and sad difference. Every sermon that he preached, every speech that he delivered, was now a heavy draft on his physical resources. I do not think that he ever suffered much pain or sickness, only lassitude and depression. In this state he continued for several years, the old fires ready to burst forth when sufficiently fanned, but each forth-burst indicating more clearly than the preceding that the supply of fuel was not sufficient to compensate for the waste.

Fortunately—or unfortunately, according to the point of view—there was no lack of occasions of sufficient potency to form the needed blast. There was the Robertson Smith controversy, there was his jubilee, there was the Covenanting Commemoration, and there was the controversy on instrumental music in public worship. On his action in these three matters I shall dwell very briefly.

The Robertson Smith case arose out of the article "Bible" in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," by Mr. Robertson Smith, Professor of Hebrew in the Free Church College at Aberdeen. There were long and complicated proceedings on the part of the College Committee and the Presbytery and Synod of Aberdeen. But the case did not come before the General Assembly until 1876, and it continued to engross the main attention of the Church until 1881. As Dr. Begg, although he took the most intense interest in the case from first to last, did not occupy a leading place in the discussion, it does not fall to me to enter into any detailed account of it. Attempts were sedulously made to exclude him and many others of us from the discussion altogether, by representing the question as one of deep scholarship, on which only profound Hebraists were entitled to form a judgment. No one ever denied, or

had any wish to deny, that Dr. Robertson Smith was a profound scholar—marvellously so for so young a man. But in point of fact there was scarcely a question raised whose decision depended in any material degree on scholarship. It was a question solely as to the authenticity, the historical accuracy, and the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures. Dr. Begg clearly saw this, and did not shrink from taking his fair share in the discussion, although he was frequently subjected to taunts and reproaches. In the Assembly of 1880 it was proposed by Sir Henry Moncreiff that the libel should not be proceeded with, but that Professor Smith should be removed from his chair. This course Dr. Begg regarded as altogether unconstitutional, and moved that the libel should be prosecuted. Other motions were made, more in the Professor's favour than either of these. Eventually one of these was carried by a majority of seven (299–292), to the effect that the libel be dropped, and that "Professor Smith being blameworthy for the unguarded and incomplete statements of his articles, which have occasioned much anxiety in the Church and given offence to many brethren zealous for the Word of God, instruct the Moderator to admonish Professor Smith with due solemnity as to the past, in the confident expectation that the defects referred to will be guarded against and avoided in time to come." This was carried, because those who took an unfavourable view of the Professor's case could not agree as to the course that ought to be pursued. A good deal of blame was cast upon Sir Henry Moncreiff and Dr. Begg at the time for not supporting one another. But, looking back after so long a time, I do not think that either was blameworthy. Sir Henry, while strongly condemning the Professor's views, and holding them to be of "heretical tendency," was not altogether convinced that his statements amounted to heresy in the technical sense of the term. Dr. Begg, on the other hand, held that a man once served with a libel was entitled to stand or fall by that libel.

It could scarcely be expected that the matter should rest there. Nor did it. It was brought before the Assembly of 1881 by the proceedings of the Commission and by overtures from Presbyteries. Three votes were taken on the subject in that Assembly, and in all of them the motion was carried which was the more unfavourable to Professor Smith. In virtue of the motion carried in the last of these votes, Professor Smith was removed from his chair. Dr. Begg voted in favour of all the motions that were carried. I may say that this settlement was perhaps the most expedient in the circumstances, although many were very sensible of the anomaly that a man should retain the status and the rights of a minister, who was declared by the General Assembly unfit to be entrusted with those of a professor. Our people are as much entitled to protection from unsound teaching as are our students.

Dr. Begg was ordained at Maxwelltown on the 18th of May 1830, and a jubilee celebration of that event was held in Newington Church on the 18th of May 1880. There was great ground for thanksgiving. Yet—as is probably the case on all such occasions—there was a note of sadness mingled with the shout of jubilation. Few men indeed ever passed through fifty years of work and suffering with less "scathe" than Dr. Begg had sustained. Yet those whose memories could go back to the days when the young and handsome and eloquent preacher attracted large congregations to Lady Glenorchy's could not prevent the mingling with their thankfulness of the thought, *O quam mutatus ab illo.* And this although he was still, to all outward appearance, vigorous, and although he had only exchanged the handsome figure and features of his youth for a figure and features of a different and perhaps higher order of beauty. There was no semblance of decrepitude in the one, or of senility in the other. His speech on the occasion is almost entirely reproduced in the "autobiographical" portion of this book, and therefore needs

not be further referred to. As a substantial present had been recently given him (see p. 521), the gifts presented to Mrs. Begg and him on this occasion were of the ornamental order. They are thus described in the newspapers of the following day:—"An elegant epergne and costly salver, a beautiful casket, in which an address was enclosed, a drawing-room clock, with vases to match, and a valuable dining-room clock, the whole bearing suitable inscriptions." These heir-looms adorn the house in George Square, which to Dr. Begg's friends is associated with so many pleasant memories.

A month after this, on Sabbath, 20th June 1880, services were held in several parts of the country in commemoration of the Covenanting struggles. By common consent the duty was imposed—or rather, the honour was conferred—on Dr. Begg of conducting the chief one of these services. In the afternoon of that day he preached in the Greyfriars' Churchyard to a congregation of seven or eight thousand. The scene was one never to be forgotten. The preacher's voice was heard with wonderful distinctness by the immense congregation, who were entranced by the fervid eloquence of the preacher. The sermon might be regarded by some as pessimistic, but it contained most solemn warnings as to states of matters whose existence none can deny. Dr. Begg always regarded this as one of the most memorable days of his life.

Reference has been already made to the agitation of the question of the use of hymns in public worship, and to the strenuous opposition which Dr. Begg offered to their introduction. The Assembly in 1871 sanctioned the issue of a Hymn-book by its Committee, and its use by congregations in their public worship. It was issued accordingly, and was adopted by some congregations. But it was almost universally regarded as a failure. Clamours were raised for its supersession by a better, and in 1881 a new book was sanctioned, which, I believe, is regarded as one of the best of its kind. To Dr. Begg, and those who thought with him on

this subject, the goodness or badness of the book was a matter of secondary consideration. They regarded the use of *any* book as a departure from sound principle, and the qualities of any particular book did not properly belong to them. I have already stated in substance that on this question I did not altogether agree with my friend. But I ought to bear emphatic testimony to the single-minded honesty with which he conducted the controversy.

The advocates of hymns were in the habit of making use of an argument to the effect that the refusal to permit their use would lead to what both the friends and the opponents of hymns would regret, a demand for the introduction of instrumental music. The opponents of hymns, on the contrary, maintained that hymns would be the precursors of organs. Probably they did not anticipate how soon these predictions would be verified. In 1881 it came under cognisance of the Assembly that an organ had been introduced into one of the churches of Broughty Ferry, in the Presbytery of Dundee. The Assembly, on the motion of Dr. Begg, disapproved of the proceeding, and ordered the organ to be removed. But at next Assembly overtures came up in favour of the permission of instrumental music, and a large Committee was appointed to consider the whole matter and to report to the following Assembly. On this Committee Dr. Begg—unfortunately, as I think—refused to act, and the main burden of opposition to the innovation fell on me. The result of the matter was a resolution of the Assembly of 1882, to the effect that the Assembly is not aware of anything in the law or constitution of the Church which makes the use of instrumental music unlawful! Thus the matter was left absolutely undecided. Such a finding of the Assembly has no vestige of authority pertaining to it. It is in direct opposition to several judicial and authoritative findings of previous Assemblies and the unchallenged sentences of the inferior courts. It leaves it open to the opponents of instrumental music to

oppose the introduction of instrumental music precisely as they might have opposed it had the finding never been given. It was, by the acknowledgment of some of its supporters, arrived at in order to avoid the risk of any authoritative resolution being disapproved by Presbyteries under the Barrier Act.

In connection with the action of the Free Church with respect to Disestablishment and Instrumental Music, associations were formed for "Church Defence" and for "Purity of Worship." Dr. Begg's sympathies with these were strong. But the main portion of the active work he left to younger men, as Messrs. Balfour and MacEwan of Edinburgh, Gordon of Glasgow, Bannatyne of Aberdeen, and others.

The last public matter in which Dr. Begg took part was in connection with what were called the Strome-Ferry Riots. A railway company had organised a system of fish traffic with a view to the promotion of Sabbath fishing by certain companies. This traffic was admittedly in direct opposition to the law of the country. Of course it was held by some that the law was bad, and that it had fallen into desuetude; but, so far as I know, it was denied by no one that it was the law. A movement was instituted for the forcible suppression of the illegal traffic. The result was the "Strome-Ferry Riots," and the conviction and imprisonment of some of the "rioters." Dr. Begg had a very lively sympathy with these men, and led in a movement to express sympathy with them by presenting each of them, on his liberation, with a Bible and a small sum of money. His action on that occasion very naturally gives rise to the question how he would have acted if he had been among us on the occasion of subsequent occurrences. All that I can say is, that I think we have no data for answering this question, further than that we are sure that he would have felt, and would have expressed, the strongest sympathy with sufferers and oppressed ones. Such he always felt, and such he never shrank from expressing.

And now the end was at hand. I have understood, from high medical authority, that the disease (diabetes) from which he had long and sorely suffered is seldom the direct cause of death, but that it so debilitates the system as to disable it from resistance to other diseases which otherwise it might have thrown off.[1] So it was in his case. About the middle of September 1883 he caught a severe cold. After a while it took the form of congestion of the lungs. This involved his confinement to bed for about a week, under the faithful care of Dr. M'Laren, and the tender nursing of his wife and daughter; but there was no apprehension of a fatal termination of the attack. On Saturday the 29th he became suddenly much worse, and there was barely time to summon Dr. M'Laren, when the strong spirit fled, and the goodly frame lay in the peace of death. The event became pretty generally known throughout the city on the following morning, and was referred to in many of the city pulpits. All felt that a prince had fallen in Israel. In the course of the week obituary notices appeared in all the Scottish and in many English and Irish newspapers. Those who had differed most widely with him—notably the *Scotsman*—vied with his warmest supporters in bearing testimony to the manly honesty of his character, the vigour of his mental powers, and the zeal with which he had prosecuted the many philanthropic works in which he had engaged. The funeral procession was a solemn and impressive scene. Thousands of solemnised spectators realised that they had lost a friend, while the members of the Newington congregation, and his brethren in the ministry of all denominations, felt that they had sustained an irreparable loss. On Sabbath the 7th of

[1] It might have been mentioned before that the existence of this disease was detected by his son Charles, then a medical student, now holding a high position as a medical man in China. It was he who insisted on the consultation with Sir Robert Christison and Dr. Sanders; and he who intelligently supervised the carrying out of the instructions of these eminent physicians, by which the progress of the disease was checked, and his father's life prolonged.—T. S.

October important "funeral sermons" were preached in Newington by two of his oldest and chiefest friends, Dr. Kennedy of Dingwall and Dr. Smeaton of Edinburgh. Many tributes were paid to his memory by the ecclesiastical and public bodies to which he belonged, and to this day there are many who, at the opening of the General Assembly, turn with sad emotion to the seat which he occupied and graced so long. In less than seven months his noble friend, Dr. Kennedy of Dingwall, was cut off by the same disease. James Begg and John Kennedy were exceedingly like each other in some respects, and exceedingly unlike in others. Their similarities and their dissimilarities combined to establish a friendship of no ordinary strength between them. As one who deemed it a privilege to be the friend of both, I close my work by applying to them the lament of that sweet singer of Israel, whose inspired songs were so dear to both:—"They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. . . . How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! . . . How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

APPENDIX.

REMINISCENCES OF THE LATE DR. JAMES BEGG.

By the Rev. ALEXANDER GREGORY, Anstruther.

The first personal trait of Dr. Begg brought under my notice was one which had given great offence to an old woman, a member of my congregation. She had belonged to Lady Glenorchy's Church, where Dr. Begg was assistant to Dr. Jones, and young Begg had happened to say with reference to his probable stay in that office, "I am but a bird of passage." Dr. Jones' congregation was one of a peculiar type, and they no doubt regarded it as a high honour for any young preacher to be assistant to their minister. This old woman plainly thought so, and every time Dr. Begg's name came up in conversation, she repeated with great keenness this remark of his, which she regarded as a slight on Dr. Jones and his congregation, which could not be forgiven, and which had manifestly prejudiced her against the speaker. Though a very good woman she was wrong in this. Dr. Begg's connection with Lady Glenorchy's was slight and temporary, and it was only natural for him to look upon it in that light, though he might no doubt have been a little more considerate of the susceptibilities of the congregation than to express himself in this offhand and brusque way.

Another party indicated his opinion of Dr. Begg to me by more than once calling him "Jamie Begg." This was an Edinburgh minister in an influential position, whose opinion

was likely to have some weight with me, and he intended that his familiar and disparaging way of speaking should prejudice me against the minister of Liberton. He failed, however, in this. He belonged to the opposite party in the Church, though he tried to trim his sails to the wind; and being an easy-going Moderate, he did not like the stirring, pushing character of the active young evangelical, which to him savoured of offensive presumption and forwardness.

Whatever impression of an unfavourable kind may have been produced on my mind by such adverse hints as these, was completely effaced by personal acquaintance with Dr. Begg. I was pleased with his frankness and manliness, notwithstanding an accompanying roughness and brusqueness; and I liked him not only for his geniality and humour, but for his "intense popular sympathies," as Dr. Duff called them, and for his energy and zeal in promoting every good cause.

My first personal intercourse with Dr. Begg took place one summer afternoon in 1842, when I had a long and pleasant walk with him in company with Dr. Robert Gordon and Dr. Candlish. The position of the Non-intrusion party at the time was one of the topics of conversation. I mentioned some difficulties in regard to the next practical step we should take. Dr. Candlish kindly and quietly dealt with these. Dr. Gordon did not say much; but I remember one remark he made which struck me. Dr. Begg, speaking in his usual ready and offhand way, had brushed my objections aside, on which Dr. Gordon said to me, "*He* has no difficulties." This not only described one of the features of our friend's mental character and temperament, but was remarkable on this account,—that when a few months after we had to take our final resolution in public convocation, the positions of these two men were reversed. Dr. Gordon, who had had this motto put into his mouth in a well-known caricature of the day, "I find great difficulty in moving," spoke out boldly

in the few words he uttered, for an instant and clear decision, while Dr. Begg thought the time had scarcely come for going so far. I was one of above thirty ministers at that decisive meeting who agreed with him. In the printed list our names were marked with an asterisk; and Dr. Guthrie, who would have his joke, called us the "hysterics." Dr. Begg's position has been sometimes misstated. It was simply that we should leave the Establishment only if the Government distinctly declared they agreed with the decisions of the Law Courts against us; the great majority holding that we should do so if the Government simply were silent and did not disown the action of the Courts of Law. Happily the risk of division in our ranks was averted by the Ministry of the day announcing their accordance with the legal decisions; and Dr. Begg was of course among the foremost of the Secessionists.

We have referred to Dr. Begg's "popular sympathies." These had appeared early in his efforts for putting the means of grace within the reach of the poor and neglected parts of the population, in his opposition to Patronage, and in his maintaining the right of the Christian people to have the choice of their ministers. No quotation was more frequently on his lips at that time than the passage in the Epistle of James about the "rich man with the gold ring and goodly apparel." They showed themselves also in his opposition to seat-rents, which he abolished in his own congregation; in his ardour in the cause of civil and religious liberty, in his enthusiasm for everything national and Scottish, in his hatred of Popery, tyranny, and oppression of every kind, and his zeal on behalf of Protestantism, the Bible, and the Sabbath. Nothing was more touching than the interest he took in his old age in the simple-hearted and well-meaning Highlanders who were imprisoned for "mobbing and rioting" to protect their Sabbath-day from unnecessary traffic; visiting them in jail and doing everything that could safely be done to alleviate

their calamity. His popular sympathies appeared also in his benevolent efforts, continued for many years, to improve the "bothies" of ploughmen and the houses of the working-classes, and otherwise to ameliorate the condition of the poor and downtrodden sons of toil. A critic has asked, "Who was his favourite poet?" We can vouch for it that one of his favourites was Burns, whose best poems he had at his finger-ends, and we remember well the force and effect with which he would quote the well-known couplet:

> "Puir tenant-bodies, scant o' cash,
> How they maun thole the factor's snash!"

While Dr. Begg was distinguished for practical sagacity and shrewdness, we may admit that in pressing some of his benevolent and Christian projects there was sometimes an eagerness and importunity which had not much taste or delicacy. But who does not feel that in prosecuting a great object about which we are in earnest, we are so apt to magnify it and to become absorbed in it, that minor considerations are forgotten? This, if we mistake not, is a weakness especially with us Scotchmen; at least we confess it for ourselves;—the *perfervidum ingenium*, with a little added bluntness, making us peculiarly liable to it.

Dr. Begg's humour made him famous; and his Scotch stories might have set up another Dean Ramsay. Yet he was no mere *raconteur*, devoting himself to the collection, the telling, and the publishing of such anecdotes. He was a hard-working minister, philanthropist, and churchman; and his story-telling was a purely secondary thing, humorous and racy anecdotes pouring out from his endless stores as the occasion required. He did not claim merely scholarship or literary skill, content with what was useful and practical, homely, and ready at hand. But though he did not burn the midnight oil, he was a diligent student, working hard at his preparations, as must have been the case from the character

of his sermons, and from his numerous speeches, articles, and pamphlets on a great variety of subjects. Having failed in getting pulpit supply on one occasion when a co-presbyter of his, I called on him about nine o'clock in the evening to ask his help. The servant said he had retired for the night, whereupon I sent in my request to him. The servant re-appeared and conducted me to his bedroom; he was already in bed, and while kindly and at once granting my request, he explained his retiring to rest so early by telling me that it was his habit to rise every morning at five o'clock, and get part of his studies over before breakfast. The rest of the day was chiefly occupied with pastoral work and other more public duties.

On another occasion he took me into his study, and showed me, among other things, his fine editions of the Puritan divines, for whom he expressed great veneration—telling me that he made their works his constant study. This taste appeared in his preaching, which was as distinctly of the Puritan stamp as Spurgeon's. And if Dr. Begg wanted something of his spirituality and unction, he far surpassed him in chasteness, never allowing a trace of humour or grotesqueness to appear in the pulpit. His sermons were not distinguished for metaphysical subtleties or poetical imagery, but were a clear, direct, and forcible statement of the great evangelic doctrines; and we observed that when he advanced anything besides Scripture in support of them, which he often did, the argument was extremely sensible and judicious, being drawn from admitted facts, and what every hearer's experience attested, and so was felt to be irresistibly convincing. His illustrations, which were chiefly Scriptural, were very pat, and presented in a vivid and graphic style. He had a rare faculty of quoting the Bible, which he ascribed to his father having made his children commit large portions of Scripture to memory—a practice which he was wont strongly to recommend, specially insisting on the value of the Book of

Proverbs. This feature in his preaching has been sometimes described as "pouring out Scripture upon Scripture in full flood." This is not a correct account of his style. His quotations from the Word of God, for which he had great reverence—the reason doubtless of his fixed ideas on the doctrine, government, and worship of the Church—were numerous and frequent, but they were not promiscuous and haphazard; they were choice and select, and singularly pertinent and apt. Not only so, but there was a felicity about them which bespoke genius and spiritual insight, and which arrested attention by presenting the passage unexpectedly in a new and striking light, and shed an unwonted and pleasing illumination over the subject. The closing appeals were earnest and practical, solemn and impressive.

He was a sociable and genial man. Something of sternness in home discipline he may have inherited from his father; but he showed great affection for his children; some of his boys clambering up on his knees, while he fondled them affectionately, and praised them one by one as fine fellows, adding in a ready Scotch quotation, with a look to us and a little laugh, "Tho' I say't that sudna say't." At a Presbytery dinner, he had noticed that some of us looked rather dull, I suppose, and just as we sat down to the table, he said in pleasant tones, "Cheerfulness helps digestion. The wise man says, 'A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.'"

Beneath a rough exterior, some would say a hard one, there was something more than geniality, there was a spring of tender feeling, and even a softness of heart, in Dr. Begg. A short time after the death of his first wife, the members of Presbytery met together to consult about the best way of increasing the efficiency and spiritual success of their ministry. Dr. Begg was present at one of these meetings, and in making a few remarks on improving opportunities of doing good, he said he had learnt how suddenly they may

come to an end and be lost for ever. At these words his voice trembled, his utterance choked; and completely overpowered by his emotions, he sat down abruptly with his head on the book-board. It was a moment of surprise and solemn feeling in the meeting. It was a new revelation regarding Dr. Begg to me; but I was told he had shown the same quick tenderness of feeling some years before after the death of a child.

The last time I met Dr. Begg was at the Assembly of 1883. On one of the earlier days he and I had spoken on opposite sides of a pretty keen debate, which ended in a large majority against the Doctor. At a subsequent meeting I was expected to speak on another subject, but did not; and on the day after, he came up to me in one of the side rooms and expressed his disappointment at my not having spoken. "Why did you not speak?" he asked; "I should have liked to have heard you." This generous and friendly spirit, after our sharp passage-at-arms, touched me greatly. A few months further on in the season, we were startled by the news of his sudden death, which made a great blank in our Church, which it deprived of one of her most powerful men, while it closed an active public life full of Christian and patriotic labours, devoted with great talent and energy, and with no little success, to the religious and social welfare of Scotland.

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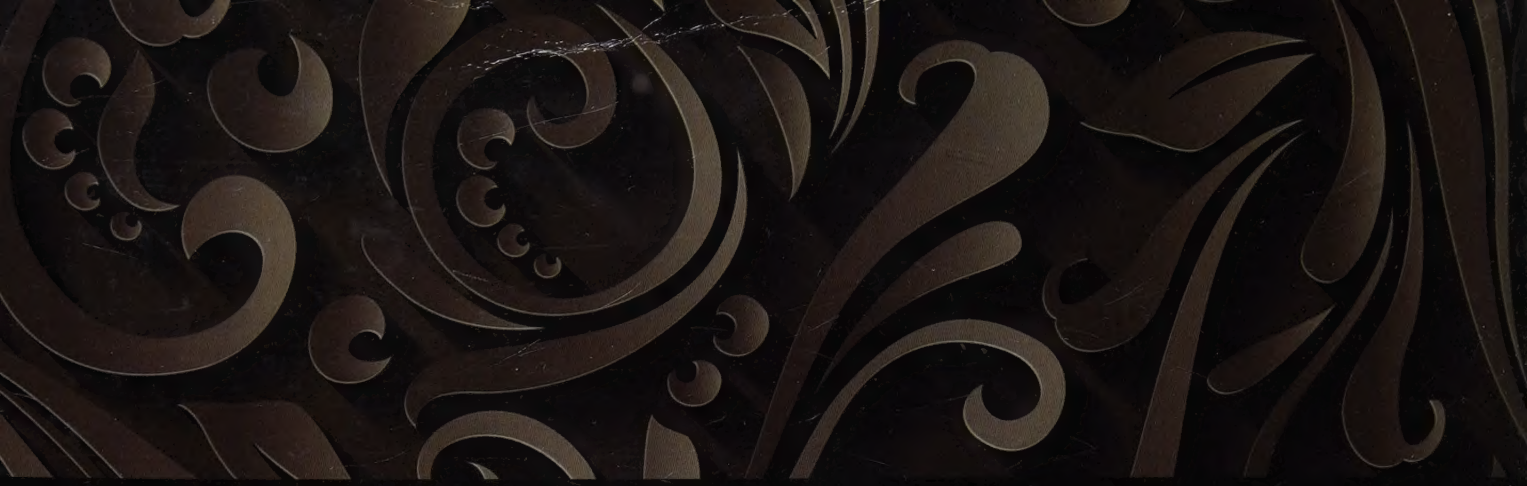

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